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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER PERSONALITY TYPE AND BURNOUT IN RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

by

Melinda Mullis Dennis

(Under the Direction of Linda M. Arthur)

## ABSTRACT

Personality type impacts so much of who an individual is and how he/she relates to various life situations and events. Teacher burnout is a contributing factor to one's stress, satisfaction, and continuation in the career of education. Because of the existing teacher shortage in the United States, administrators and policy makers need to understand the factors that contribute to burnout. Stressors that contribute to burnout in teaching include emotional exhaustion, a lack of professional guidance and peer support, and conflict with parents, peers, administrators, and students. Research into burnout suggests that some personality types may be more resilient to these stressors than others. A study of 108 teachers working in three public schools in Georgia was used to determine teacher burnout and relate this information to personality characteristics. *The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M* was used to determine the personality types of the subjects, and the *Maslach Educator's Survey* was used to identify the frequency and the degree of burnout experienced by the sample population. The data reveals demographic links to teacher burnout and the study emphasizes the attention that school system and building level administrators should focus on helping teachers avoid burnout.

INDEX WORDS: Burnout, Personality, Maslach Educator's Survey, Myers-Briggs  
Type Indicator

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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BURNOUT IN RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

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## DEDICATION

To my parents, Doyce and Nita Mullis, who continue to supply unconditional love and limitless encouragement for my every endeavor,

To my siblings, Doyce, Mandel, Merle, and Scot, for the examples of excellence you have set for me in every area of life,

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Teacher retention within primary and secondary schools has long been a challenge for educators, administrators, and advocates of public education (Ingersoll, 2001). Helping industries traditionally demonstrate higher levels of work-related stress than most other jobs, and it is common to observe burnout among persons working in helping industries. Teaching is one such helping industry. Data suggests high levels of attrition among teachers within the first three years of employment: some public educational institutions note that attrition among new educators can be greater than 60 percent, and the majority of these former teachers report that they were unable to meet the demands of the work environment. Burnout, or gradual loss of productivity in workers due to challenges in motivation or validation, is also likely to occur among teachers with more work experience (greater than three years).

Conceptual differences in personality type have long been theorized to play a role in motivation, social interaction, and behavioral outcomes. Research into personality types indicates that certain persons react to specific stimuli through similar adaptation strategies, suggesting that identifying personality types may contribute to understanding certain social scenarios, such as those found within the workplace. Indeed, advocates of personality theory indicate that it is possible to promote certain outcomes within social settings if it is recognized that those with certain personality types have unique needs specific to their type.

The study of personality types has indicated potential positive outcomes in identifying the needs of individuals and in helping improve their access to resources and assistance. Exploration of these themes within educational leadership, however, is lacking. It has been suggested that there is a “personality profile” of persons who are more prone to burnout when employed as teachers, but this personality profile is generalized and refers to physiological traits such as age and gender, and professional traits such as the number of years employed as a teacher (Friedman, 1991). It is possible that research into personality types can help expand the limited comprehension of a personality profile and its link to burnout among teachers. The study of burnout and attrition among teachers and how these may be linked to personality type opens new venues for discussion concerning how and to what extent personality type can be used to mitigate the risk of attrition.

### Background

Information on burnout and personality type needs to be clarified in order to facilitate the introduction to the study. The relationships between the helping industries and burnout will be explored, with an emphasis on the literature on teaching and burnout. Then, an overview of the research into personality type will be provided.

#### *Burnout in Education*

In 1983, the initial publication of *A Nation at Risk* predicted shortages of qualified teachers for many areas of the country (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983). This document, described as an “Imperative for



Educational Reform,” noted that the number of teachers that were currently active within the public education system was insufficient to meet the needs of the schools and could not meet anticipated demand for rising student populations. In order to increase the size and skill of the teaching force, Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, and Bassler (1988) listed two primary objectives: 1) more students can be educated to become teachers, and 2) conditions in the workplace can be modified so that skilled teachers remain in the profession. Others indicated that the requirements of the profession could be altered to reduce the negative perceptions associated with teaching in the public schools and improve the incentives offered to teachers, which would make teaching a more attractive career option for promising young professionals.

Yet the professional stresses associated with teaching were not readily identified as a principle reason why teachers left their jobs (McEnany, 1986; O’Reilley, 2005). This is not because burnout was an unfamiliar concept at the time, but that it was most frequently attached to professions other than teaching (McEnany, 1986; O’Reilley, 2005). Freudenberger (1974) first identified burnout in 1974 and noted that it could be best defined as “to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources” (p. 159). He believed that “the dedicated and the committed” employees are most prone to experience burnout because they “work too much, too long and too intensely” (p. 161). At the time of initial recognition, burnout was certainly attributed as an outcome of stress within helping professions, but these professions included clergymen, nurses, firefighters, policemen, and social

workers. Teaching was not identified in this research as a helping profession, and was therefore not grouped into the category of working professionals likely to suffer from burnout (O'Reilley, 2005; Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999).

As the study of burnout and its impact upon persons in helping professions became more profound, teachers were recognized as helping professionals and the impact of burnout was closely linked to performance outcomes in some teachers (Gold, 1993; O'Reilley, 2005). Initially, work-related stress, such as the inability to help a specific student or an overloaded curricula, was identified as the foremost cause of burnout (Gold, 1993). Gradually, additional environmental factors, especially a lack of support and encouragement from persons in positions of authority, were recognized as contributing to burnout (Brissie et al., 1988; O'Reilley, 2005; Sarros & Sarros, 1992). And, most importantly, it was recognized that burnout was a cumulative process associated with the helping professions: the causes of burnout were myriad and over time each would contribute to conditions of burnout; even if single factors were isolated and resolved, the remaining factors could still have a negative impact on the teacher's psyche (O'Reilley, 2005).

Difficulties and concerns with students and their behavior have been found to contribute to burnout (Brissie et al., 1988; Bryne, 1998; Huberman, 1993). Friedman and Farber (1992) found that teachers value students' perceptions of them more than the perceptions of parents or even principals. Student behaviors have different effects on teachers in different school cultures (Friedman, 1995). Certain types of student behaviors can be used as predictors of burnout; of

these, disrespect is the best predictor. The research of Bibou-Nakou, Stogiannidou, and Kiosseoglou (1999) found that “disobedience and off-task behavior were assessed as the most intense and frequent problems in the classroom setting” (p. 213). Lunenberg’s and Cadavid’s research (1992) revealed that teachers’ locus of control and pupil control ideology were significantly related to each other and to teacher burnout; humanistic teachers and females were primarily affected by disrespect, while custodial teachers and males were primarily affected by inattentiveness. Kudva (1999) found that a significant relationship exists between the development of negative attitudes towards students, development of increased feelings of emotional exhaustion and fatigue, and the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively leading to a lack of personal achievement and certain professional factors. Such negative self-perceptions are strongly related to burnout. Friedman’s and Farber’s study (1992) indicated that how teachers perceive themselves is more important than how others perceive them.

Environmental factors could also contribute to teacher burnout. Friedman (1991) found that organizational culture and climate lead to teacher burnout. He also found specific characteristics of high burnout schools. In high-burnout schools educational goals were set and measurable and good teachers had extensive knowledge, were dedicated to the job, taught interesting, intriguing lessons, and were achievement oriented. Also in high burnout schools, administrative structure was a clearly defined hierarchy, the physical environment was usually clean and orderly, teachers were older, faculty included fewer

females, teachers had more experience and were less mobile, and their education levels were lower.

Lack of support from administrators and coworkers and lack of involvement in decision making is also a significant causal factor of teacher burnout (Brissie et al., 1988; Sarros & Sarros, 1992). Bryne (1998) found that problems with administrators dominated the list of the chief causes for burnout. Respondents in the Bryne study sensed disregard from those in authority. They felt that administrators “failed to alleviate their workload while denigrating them at the same time” (§ 15). Principal perceptions and reactions to stress influence teacher stress (Pahnos, 1990), and stressed teachers create negative stress environments for students.

Finally, personal factors contribute to burnout. Gender (Lunenbergh and Cadavid, 1992; Sarros & Sarros, 1992) and age (Huberman, 1993; Sarros & Sarros, 1992) were found to be significant predictors of burnout. Bibou-Nakou et al. (1999) found that male teachers were significantly “more burdened” than female teachers.

A study by Huberman (1993) found that burnout peaked between 7 and 12 years of experience and between the ages of 30 and 45. However, research of burnout in beginning teachers varies and the research fluctuates. Bibou-Nakou et al. (1999) attributed the low levels of burnout in their study to the fact that “the majority of teachers were quite young with only a few years of educational practice” (p. 215), but Hall, Villeme, and Phillippy (1989) investigated the predisposition for burnout among first-year teachers. Their research found that:

teachers who were preparing to quit or who were contemplating quitting perceived less administrative support, felt less satisfied with teaching, experienced more job-related stress, and held more negative attitudes toward students than did the teachers who planned to continue teaching. (p. 16)

Data from this research also suggested that first-year elementary school teachers felt more satisfied with teaching than did those who taught middle or high school. Findings of the Hall, Villeme, and Phillippy study further indicated that the responses of those new teachers who were already planning to quit or who were considering quitting were more consistent with characteristics associated with burnout than the responses of those who indicated plans to continue teaching. As a result, the researchers concluded that burnout can be directly linked to teacher attrition. This was not only true of older teachers who suffered from prolonged workplace conditions in which multiple factors contributed to burnout, but also among new teachers who lacked experiences and resiliency to work-related challenges.

### *Personality Type*

The study of personality has a long and, arguably, less-than-scientific history. The first known explorations into personality type were directed by the philosopher Hippocrates, who postulated a method for differentiating personality types around 400 B.C. The Hippocratic model classified individuals, according to their temperaments, into one of four humors: blood, black bile, yellow bile, or phlegm. Those categorized by blood were labeled sanguine which was said to be

persons who were optimistic and hopeful. Black bile described the melancholic type who was sad or depressed in nature. Yellow bile was the humor associated with those who were choleric or irascible, and phlegm temperaments were associated with the phlegmatic or apathetic (Merenda, 1987).

Contemporary research into personality has likewise been viewed as a highly subjective process in which specific personality traits are often arbitrarily identified and categorized (Kiersey & Bates, 1978; Thomson, 1998). This results from the vast challenges that manifest when attempting to categorize persons from vast and different backgrounds. All individuals:

want different things; they have different motives, purposes, aims, values, needs, drives, impulses, urges. . . . They believe differently: they think, cognize, conceptualize, perceive, understand, comprehend, and cogitate differently. And of course, manners of acting and emoting, governed as they are by wants and beliefs, follow suit and differ radically among people. (p. 2)

Over time, researchers who were able to reduce individual personalities down to core components have identified some clearly discernable links to behavior and motivation (Thomson, 1998). Early scientific research into personality types was accomplished by the Swiss psychologist/psychiatrist Carl Jung. The publication of Jung's *Psychological Types* in 1923 ushered in a new era of personality study and research, in which he was concerned with "conscious use of the functions of perception and decision making in the areas of life in which these functions are used" (§ 4). Jung's views towards personality

and personality theory were shaped by three continua, which are a basic attitude of extroversion or introversion and two functional dimensions of sensing or intuiting and thinking or feeling (Miller, 1991). Jung believed that these descriptors played a substantial role in explaining individual differences (Schott, 1992).

Myers worked on categorizing personality types. In her Preface to Gifts Differing (1980), Myers stated “that many problems might be dealt with more successfully if approached in the light of C.G. Jung’s theory of psychological types” (p. xiii). Myers extended Jung’s theory by adding a fourth dimension, judging/perceiving. She was determined to make Jung’s clinical theories applicable to everyday life. According to Myers (1980), personality is determined by four preferences which concern a person’s use of perception and judgment. An individual’s perception determines what he/she sees in any given situation and his/her judgment determines the choices he/she makes in dealing with the situation. An individual prefers either extroversion or introversion (E or I). This preference affects the person’s choice to focus on the outer world or on the world of ideas. Kiersey and Bates (1978) clarified these themes from early published literature by Myers (1980) and explained that an individual who selects people as a source or energy is a probable extrovert, while one who selects solitude in order to reenergize is a probable introvert.

The second preference involves sensing or intuition (S or N); this affects the individual’s choice “to use one kind of perception instead of the other when either could be used” (Myers, 1980). Those individuals who are sensing are

realistic and utilize their five senses in interpreting the world around them.

Intuitives often read between the lines and are comfortable when mere facts are not available.

The third preference is thinking or feeling (T or F), affecting a person's choice "to use one kind of judgment instead of the other when either could be used" (Myers, 1980). Thinkers like decisions that are impersonal, logical, and objective, but those classified as Feelers make decisions based on personal judgment and subjectivity.

The fourth preference is that of judgment or perception (J or P). This preference affects a person's choice of whether to use the judging or the perceptive attitude. Judging types prefer closure while those who are perceiving types like their options to remain "fluid and open" (Keirsey and Bates, 1978).

Forty years of study and trials led Myers and her mother, Katherine Briggs, to develop the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The MBTI utilizes 16 psychological types based upon Jungian personality archetypes and the subsequent research done by Myers and her associates. These 16 psychological types were derived from the earlier categorizations of personality traits but were simplified for use as a measurement tool:

E (extroversion) – an extrovert's interest turns outward to the world of action, people and things; versus

I (introversion) – an introvert's interest turns more often to the inner world of ideas and private things.



S (sensate) – focuses on the facts that come from the personal experience and can also focus on details; versus

N (intuitive) – focuses on the meanings behind the facts and can more easily see the “big picture.”

T (thinker) – Decisions are made through examining data and maintaining an impersonal distance; versus

F (feeler) – Decisions are made by paying attention to personal values and feelings.

J (judger) – Maintains outer life based on recognized expectations and outcomes; versus

P (perceiver) - Maintains outer life in an open, receiving way.

McCaulley (1990) explained that “Jung and Myers assumed that every person uses all eight processes (E, I, S, N, T, F, J, and P) but that one of each pair is intrinsically preferred over the other” (§ 21). Each combination represents a “different personality, characterized by the interests, values, needs, habits of mind, and surface traits that naturally result” (Myers, 1980, p. 4). Arnau, Thompson and Rosen (1999) note that even though the MBTI is criticized for “(1) yielding dichotomized types rather than continuous scores, (2) not acknowledging that some people may have relatively neutral or undifferentiated preferences on some dimensions; and (3) invoking a forced-choice response format, which inherently yields spurious negative correlations among items” (§ 3), it remains the most widely used personality instrument.

### Statement of the Problem

Burnout is a work-related problem found in some individuals employed in human services careers, including education. Teacher burnout impacts teacher job satisfaction, school climate, and culture. Symptoms of teacher burnout are both physical and behavioral. Teachers exhibiting characteristics associated with burnout experience negative psychological effects and increasingly negative behaviors that ultimately affect students and their achievement. Teacher burnout can stem from a variety of sources, including student-related matters, personal difficulties, and factors related to the environment and/or nature of the teaching profession. Teachers may exhibit characteristics of burnout which are mild, moderate, or severe in nature. They may also experience burnout in one or more of the following areas: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal achievement.

Educational leaders have an obligation to the students and faculties whom they serve. In order to be most effective, administrators must strive to meet the individual needs of those within their schools. Having knowledge of teachers' individual personalities and their levels and areas of burnout may help school administrators better serve teachers so that teachers, in turn, may better serve students. Whether a link exists between specific teacher personality and teacher burnout has not been determined. No known literature exists that examines the relationship between individual teacher personality and levels and areas of burnout. Burnout has a negative impact on the quality and the consistency of the teaching environment, but it is not known whether burnout can be mitigated

through personality testing and applying the data from research in personality type to individual and environmental reforms.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether teacher burnout and individual personality are related in a select population of Georgia middle school teachers. If a link between personality type and burnout is found, teachers that are at risk of burnout within schools could be identified. Also, reforms within the schools could be promoted to reduce burnout (i.e. improving communication between the teachers and the administration and providing increased access to professional development for teachers).

### Research Questions

The overarching research question is this: Is there a relationship between individual teacher personality and teacher burnout? Additionally, the following subquestions will guide the research:

1. To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to personality type?
2. To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to teachers' levels and areas of burnout?

### Significance of the Study

Teachers who exhibit effects of burnout can negatively impact students and student achievement. In this era of increased accountability, educators need to maximize every possible influence upon students and their achievement. To capitalize on their skills, to realize their true strengths, and to avoid or decrease burnout, teachers need to know themselves as individuals.

Research in the areas of personality and burnout is abundant. In the field of education, however, a limited number of studies exists that can provide valuable information to aid teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards in their quests to serve students in their schools and districts most effectively. The researcher has, through this study, been able to provide participants with data that may help them to become better teachers. The researcher has given participants information regarding personality types. Perhaps this information will increase the participants' awareness of others by making them more understanding and more tolerant of those with whom they work, both students and fellow teachers. The researcher has also provided each participant with an individual personality profile. The results of these inventories may provide participants with the self-understanding necessary to prevent burnout or to decrease current levels. Additionally, the information provided through this study offers information to school leaders that should enhance efforts to increase school morale and faculty camaraderie. This study has produced information that may even be used by superintendents or their

designees in planning professional development activities for their schools and/or districts.

As a former high school and middle school language arts teacher and current middle school administrator, the researcher has worked alongside those teachers who exhibited symptoms associated with teacher burnout. This researcher has seen how a once outstanding teacher becomes, at best, marginal due to burnout behaviors. The researcher has also seen the effect that teachers exhibiting these symptoms can have on their students. Motivational levels of students, or the lack of motivation, often mirror the enthusiasm demonstrated by the teacher. When students become apathetic, they become much more difficult to teach, compounding the problems of the marginal teacher.

As an administrator, the researcher feels a great sense of obligation to students and faculty. Knowing that school programs are important but that the real business of school is carried on in classrooms, this researcher believes that the most valuable administrators are facilitators. Increased knowledge of faculty members would allow the researcher to serve them more effectively. Realizing this strong sense of obligation, the researcher, through this study, seeks to provide information that may help teachers to realize a greater awareness of themselves and others so that students may be the ultimate beneficiaries.

### Procedures

In order to explore the relationship between individual teacher personality and teacher burnout, the researcher gathered data from teachers in three rural public middle schools within central Georgia. Each of these schools serves

grades six through eight, operates in grade-level teams according to the middle school philosophy, and has a student population of fewer than 1000. The researcher administered the instruments at school-wide faculty meetings in each of the schools.

### Research Design

The intent of this particular portion of the research is to provide information regarding the design of the study, its population, instrumentation, and collection and analyses of data. In addition to a demographic questionnaire, two instruments were utilized to gather information regarding the participants relative to their personality predispositions and burnout symptoms. The particular type of quantitative research to be presented is ex-post-facto research because no variables will be manipulated. This type of research is used widely in the social sciences and lends itself perfectly to this study. As Sprinthall (1994) states,

the researcher does not manipulate the independent variable. Rather, the independent variable is assigned. That is, the subjects are measured on some trait they already possess and then are assigned to categories on the basis of that trait. These trait differences (independent variable) are then compared with measures that the researcher takes on some other dimension (dependent variable). p. 247

### Population

The population selected for this study consisted of middle school teachers from three rural public schools in central Georgia. A purposive sample was utilized to select the three schools. Each of these schools represented a different

school district within District E of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals. The selection of three schools allowed the researcher to collect data from an adequate number of participants.

### Instrumentation

After permission was obtained from the Internal Review Board of Georgia Southern University and building principals, the researcher visited each of the three schools to administer the instruments during a faculty meeting. The researcher administered the instruments to all certified teachers. Both instruments are self-report surveys. *The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* elicits forced choice responses and was used to determine individual teacher personality types. Teachers completed this survey in 20-30 minutes. The *Maslach Educator's Survey* utilizes a likert scale and was utilized to ascertain whether individual teachers are experiencing burnout and, if so, the degree and area of the burnout. This survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. In addition to the two instruments, each teacher completed a short demographics questionnaire. Each of the three documents was returned to the researcher when completed by the participant.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, measures of central tendency, and variability were used to summarize responses to both of the published instruments. The chi square analysis was used to determine any relation between demographic characteristics and burnout. A oneway Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) linked demographics to burnout. A oneway ANOVA was

also used to investigate the relationship between personality and burnout. The researcher utilized the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software package to analyze the collected data. This software was utilized to efficiently and accurately analyze the data gathered during the research process of this study. SPSS was designed to analyze large amounts of quantitative data; thus, it was selected because of the quantitative nature of this study (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 2002).

### Limitations

Limitations for this study include the data collection method. Both instruments are self-reporting surveys. Of the two survey instruments, one instrument is entitled *Maslach Educator's Survey*, developed by Maslach, Jackson, and Schwab, names that teachers might recognize in association with burnout research. If these names were recognized, teacher responses might have been affected. Also, participants were teachers from three central Georgia public middle schools, making the results less generalizable than they might be otherwise.

### Delimitations

A delimitation of this study includes surveying only middle school teachers from central Georgia's public schools. This does not allow for consideration of a relationship between personality and burnout in teachers from elementary and high schools, teachers from private schools, or teachers who live in other areas.



### Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will be used:

- Attrition – The point at which a person decides to leave an environment for specific reasons.
- Burnout – A prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job; defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy.
- Demographic Profile – Personal information concerning the survey participants including gender, age, years of experience, present teaching assignment, etc.
- Depersonalization – An educator's attempt to cognitively distance him/herself from those (other faculty and students) with whom he/she works; the development of negative attitudes and impersonal responses towards coworkers; one of the three dimensions of teacher burnout.
- Emotional Exhaustion – Feelings of overextension and exhaustion caused by daily work pressures; one of the three dimensions of teacher burnout.
- Extrovert - A sociable individual who selects people as a source or energy.
- Feeling – A personality characteristic exhibited by those who make decisions based on emotion and value judgments.
- Introvert – An individual who selects solitude and/or solitary activities in order to reenergize.
- Intuiting – A personality characteristic that describes one who is innovative and is comfortable with imagination and possibilities.

- Judging – A personality characteristic that describes an individual with a strong work ethic who strives for closure, pushes toward decisions, and takes deadlines seriously.
- Lack of personal achievement – Inefficacy; a deflated sense of personal achievement and diminished self-esteem; one of the three dimensions of teacher burnout.
- Middle school – A school that houses grades six through eight and is organized around the middle school concept.
- Perceiving – A personality characteristic that describes an individual with a play ethic who is comfortable with keeping options fluid and open.
- Personality – Individual characteristics that effect behavior and are influenced by one's beliefs, decision-making styles, preferences, goals, etc.
- Retention – The ability to preserve a person within a specific environment.
- Sensing – A personality characteristic that describes one who is realistic and practical, one who wants, trusts, and remembers facts.
- Thinking – A personality characteristic exhibited by those who make impersonal decisions based on logic and objectivity.

### Summary

Teacher performance and retention are serious concerns among experienced and inexperienced teaching professionals. Burnout, including the loss of motivation and productivity associated with a job, has been linked to helping professionals in general and to teaching in particular. In order to improve

the quality and the consistency of education in public schools, it is necessary to retain educators through reducing the likelihood of attrition.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship exists between teacher personality and teacher burnout in a selected group of Georgia middle school teachers. This information can aid teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards as they seek to most effectively serve students.

The researcher administered two instruments, the *Myers-Briggs Temperament Indicator, Form M* and the *Maslach Educator's Survey*, to teachers from three central Georgia schools. The researcher then determined, with the assistance of SPSS, whether individual personality and any level and/or area of teacher burnout were related.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The relevant literature for the research project encompasses a wide range of disciplines within the domains of teaching and in the study of professional positioning and competence. This chapter presents the literature through focusing on these domains, wherein personality analysis, the causes and impacts of burnout, and the policy and practice implications are studied. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to a clear, coherent summary of significant research conducted within these domains and indicate their relevance to and impact on the direction of the research project.

#### Personality Testing

It is not fully recognized how, why, or to what extent the personality develops and how individual personalities are formed. Anecdotal observations among parents suggest that the personality is evident soon after birth, where personality traits that appear in infants persist throughout the child's early development and adolescence. Yet the implications of personality as a component of the child's personal character are also contrasted to the lived experiences of the individual, in which the child grows and develops based upon the information obtained throughout contact with others and quiet introspection.

These issues, while important, cannot be answered within the scope of the current literature review. However, efforts taken to understand personality types and to identify specific influences on them have given rise to a large body of literature designed to identify, categorize, and assess specific personalities and

how these impact the behavior of individuals. As such, it is necessary to identify the possible origins of personality types and how and why specific personality traits can be shared by multiple persons; also, it is necessary to identify why it is important that specific personality traits can be categorized. This section shall focus on the relevant literature.

### Personality Trait Structure

Personality trait structures are derived from the categorization of traits common to specific personalities. Historically, there has been strong anthropological evidence to suggest that personality types emerge from the backgrounds and the cultural settings in which the individual has been situated. There is also some limited evidence to suggest that there may be biological and evolutionary patterns of convergence between the individual, the individual's culture, and the cultivation of specific personality traits.

The concept that personalities are composed of "traits" suggests that it is possible to identify an individual's personality through identifying which of these traits are most prominently displayed (Cattell, 1943; Kummerow, Barger, & Kirby, 1997; Arnan, Thompson, & Rosen, 1999). The presence of specific traits suggests in turn that the individual is more likely to respond in a predictable manner to certain environmental stimuli. As such, it is widely believed that a successful depiction and comprehension of personality traits can be directly correlated to the successful prediction of an individual's behavior and reactions to specific environmental stimuli.

The study of personality traits has been associated with behavioral prediction, motivation, and enhancing performance through reducing environmental factors that may deter or prevent an individual from achieving certain goals (McCaulley, 1990). Personality traits can be divided into categories, often referred to as *personality types*, where the characteristics identified by specific personality traits can be categorized, or typed. It is believed that personality traits and personality types are difficult to change or modify, as these are essential aspects of the individual's identity and therefore are ingrained therein (McCaulley, 1990; Miller, 1991).

Miller (1991) suggested that the study of personality traits may have an impact on planning and placement of persons within various life experiences; in addition to job placement, the author believed that it may be possible to optimize children's learning experiences within schools through identifying their personality type and connecting this type to an effective teaching profile. A teaching profile that utilizes personality type would maximize strategies that target the strengths of the student's personality while minimizing the corresponding weaknesses.

### Personality Traits and Cultural Backgrounds

While the vast majority of the literature on personality traits focuses almost exclusively on the cultural and background content of the individual as the principle motive force behind personality, a secondary discipline of research has suggested that there may be a biological basis for some personality types. McCrae and Costa (1997) found that the relationships between personality types

and specific behavioral patterns among persons sharing various personality types could not be dismissed on a biological basis. Instead, the researchers identified that there were specific markers within personality types that suggested a biological or an evolutionary basis of personality, and that the cultural traits in which personality has evolved has incorporated these traits. Essentially, each culture can be identified as having its own unique “personality,” one that is expressed by its members.

McCrae and Costa (1997) utilizes the “five-factor model” of personality trait analysis. The researchers summarized the five-factor model (FFM) as follows:

According to the FFM, most personality traits can be described in terms of five basic dimensions, called Neuroticism versus Emotional Stability (N); Extraversion or Surgency (E); Openness to Experience or Intellect, Imagination, or Culture (O); Agreeableness versus Antagonism (A); and Conscientiousness or Will to Achieve (C). These dimensions can be found in trait adjectives as well as in questionnaires created to operationalize a variety of personality theories (p. 509).

Different tools have been developed to utilize the FFM, wherein the distinguishing traits isolated by these various components are identified, categorized, and analyzed according to the tool. The researchers used the Revised NEO Personality Inventory as their instrument to analyze the data

acquired using the FFM. McCrae and Costa (1997) hypothesized that there was a linguistic basis through which personality types could be compared.

Personality and its assessment are intimately bound with natural language. All human cultures include words for describing individual differences in personality, and a large part of the process of socialization consists of learning these terms and how they are applied to oneself and others. Unlike physical characteristics, personality traits are abstractions that cannot be directly measured and must instead be inferred from complex patterns of overt and covert behavior (p. 510).

Language, therefore, was more likely to demonstrate abstract commonalities than a physical analysis of the individual. These processes utilized Goldberg's (1981) theory of the "lexical approach to personality structure" because personality traits are so central to human interactions, all important traits will have been encoded in natural language. Thus, an analysis of trait language should yield the structure of personality itself" (McCrae & Costa, 1997; 510). The researchers then sought to identify whether personality types could be demonstrated in language, and whether persons from distinctive cultures could be identified as having specific personality traits based upon their spoken language processes. If this were the case, then the cross-cultural traits that have been identified as the most likely source of personality could be minimized in terms of their importance.



The researchers compared seven societies to identify the language-centered traits. Using the FFM and the Revised NEO Personality Inventory, the researchers took samples from persons who spoke English but were from seven distinctive cross-cultural backgrounds. One thousand persons who were over age 21 were included in the sample (500 males and 500 females). The seven distinctive cross-cultural groups were German, Portuguese, Israel, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and non-ethnic U.S. residents (control). The results demonstrates that there were points of congruence among the data for persons within all seven distinctive cross-cultural groups; while each group tended to have different responses to the questions, the individual members of the groups themselves tended to have similar responses. Thus, personality traits (e.g.: aggression, fearfulness, assertiveness, etc.) may be expressed within a culture as well as among its population.

#### Categorization within Personality Assessment and Assessment Tools

Many different personality assessment tools appear in the literature, and each has merit. While the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI) is considered the single largest and most important personality test available, it is necessary to identify several other personality measurement instruments in order to demonstrate how and why the MBTI was selected as the most appropriate choice for the current research project.

The research and ongoing theoretical analysis of Raymond Bernard Cattell are considered one of the formative explorations into personality trait theory and have served as a functional foundation for much of the work within

personality research. Cattell was a psychologist who worked in the areas of intelligences (Cattell, 1990). He believed that it was possible to identify the origins of intelligence, but also how intelligence changed over time and based upon specific catalysts. Fluid intelligence (FI) is the process of continuous problem-solving and the ability to derive meaning from new conditions and circumstances. Crystallized intelligence (CI), in contrast, is the ability to return to one's personal experiences and background in order to apply previous knowledge and skills learned therein.

Based upon his research into intelligences, Cattell developed one of the first ranked personality assessment tools in the late 1930s (Cattell, 1990). His *16 Personality Factor Model* was different from any previous personality measurement instrument. It created a taxonomical hierarchy through which various personality traits could be identified and classified (Rossier, de Stadelhofen, & Berthoud, 2004). These sixteen factors were warmth, reasoning, emotional stability, dominance, liveliness, rule-consciousness, social boldness, sensitivity, abstractedness, vigilance, apprehension, private-ness, openness to change, self-reliance, tension, and perfectionism. Cattell believed that language was the best indicator of personality type and identified that specific speech patterns and behaviors corresponded to language; his work also led to research such as that proposed by Goldberg (1981) and McCrae and Costa (1997) in the study of linguistic indicators of personality type. Other researchers analyzed the various personalities categorized by the 16 Personality Factor Model and concluded that personality could be profiled and various traits

and likely behavioral outcomes could be assigned to these profiles (Rossier, de Stadelhofen, & Berthoud, 2004).

The *DISK* model is another popular strategy that is utilized to determine personality traits. Marston (1928) was an early pioneer in personality research and “viewed people as behaving along two axes with their actions tending to be active or passive depending upon the individual's perception of the environment as either single antagonistic or favorable” (PersonalityPro.com, 2007; para. 6). The process of determination and evaluation created an axis with quadrants, in which each of the four quadrants represented the expression of personality within an individual. The four quadrants were described as follows:

- Dominance produces activity in an antagonistic environment.
- Influence (originally called inducement) produces activity in a favorable environment.
- Steadiness produces passivity in a favorable environment.
- Compliance produces passivity in an antagonistic environment.

(PersonalityPro.com, 2007; para. 8).

These four traits provided the *DISK* model with its name. When successfully isolated, the personality traits represented by the individual could be “plotted” according to their alignment on the X-axis and the Y-axis, and the quadrant in which these were situated was believed to correspond to the individual's personality profile.

Refined theories of personality analysis and assessment have suggested that there are better, more efficient strategies that can be applied to personality

type. The *Big Five* personality traits are often identified in respect to the five-factor model (FFM); the FFM was previously mentioned as the data collection instrument used by McCrae and Costa (1997). Again, the five factors used in this tool are neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. These five personality traits are contrasted against five situational norms, which are urgency, agreeableness, dependability, culture, and emotional stability. When the FFM is used, the subject is asked to identify his or her personal reaction to a given scenario, and the results are identified in respect to the five traits and how these are manifested in respect to the limitations placed upon the subject by the five situational norms. Multiple tools, such as the *Revised NEO Personality Inventory*, have been developed around the criteria established within the FFM and are used to determine their presence and prevalence within an individual's responses.

#### Ethical Concerns Associated with Personality Testing

Finally, there are also ethical issues that must be considered in respect to personality theory. Jung initially proposed that modifications to an individual's character could be carefully cultivated if the individual's original personality was recognized. Similarly, Myer (1985) thought that some limited modifications could be achieved through careful recognition of the individual's personality and helping the individual mesh the existing personality traits with his or her life goals; many of the research articles on the MBTI reflect this theme and imply that some minor personality changes can be successfully incorporated into the individual's character. Miller (1991), in contrast, suggests that there is a serious problem

inherent in these concepts, where personality is believed by some to be a fluid construct instead of an innate definition of who the individual is as a person. In his article, "Personality types, learning styles, and educational goals," Miller (1991) critically identified how teaching strategies targeted towards personality types may unintentionally have a negative impact on certain students. More importantly, these negative effects might emerge even when the student is integrated into a teaching style that is targeted towards his or her personality type. Miller (1991) emphasizes that it is important that personality types are not identified as a definitive streamlining system that can effectively pigeonhole various individuals into ideal educational, professional, and life scenarios. Rather, Miller (1991) says that it is important to take other issues into consideration, where:

I believe that wholesale attempts to encourage stylistic versatility in all students is not only a waste of time and resources, but can also be psychologically damaging. Extremely specialized students should be left alone, secure within the confines of their dominant mode. Certainly, attempts should be made to adjust teaching to suit these styles, but not to change them. It follows that versatility is a reasonable goal for those who are already predisposed to it. In other words, to those that hath shall be given. The agenda for research, in such circumstances, would be to find ways of identifying the specialized and the proto-versatile, thereby determining who should be left alone (pp. 160 - 161).

Thus, there are ethical concerns inherent in personality research, where it needs to be recognized that there are sharp differences between recognizing personality types and forcing persons to conform to the expectations of personality type. He notes that it must be recognized that there is a distinction between “intelligence” and “personality,” where the abilities and the potential inherent within an individual are often confused in respect to their significance; intelligence can be cultivated and applied to problem-solving, Miller (1991) writes, but personality is the sum of the individual and cannot be used or adapted as a tool to meet a given problem or set of circumstances. Recognizing personality traits and identifying personality type are important, Miller (1991) concludes, but their significance as a component of lifestyle choice and decision-making may be mistakenly applied in the research and within personality assessment profiling and counseling.

### The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

While other personality analysis and categorization instruments exist, the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI) is the most widely used tool of its kind. As was defined and described in Chapter One, the MBTI identifies eight components of personality and can be used to assess personality types. The background of the MBTI was identified in Chapter One, and research that explores the utility and appropriateness of its use will be explored within this section.

McCaulley (1990) conducted a review of the MBTI and its applicability within personality analysis. The author suggested that the MBTI was best applicable when it was used as a process in which the various aspects of

personality were reviewed and critically identified in respect to their “balance” (p. 183). It is assumed that “one of the four functions (S, N, T, or F) will lead or be dominant over the others and a second function will provide balance as an auxiliary” (p. 183). The conceptual identification that a single function was dominant led Jung, and later, Myers, to suggest that personalities were only able to cultivate a single dominant trait. These authorities “believed that it is practically impossible for anyone to develop all four psychological functions simultaneously. Rather, in the ideal type development, individuals meet the demands of their cultures by differentiating first and foremost the function that comes most naturally” (p. 183). There were consequences of these differentiation processes, for as time progressed and the person cultivated a single dominant personality trait, the others suffered and were suppressed.

As a consequence of the one-sided development of the dominant, aided by the auxiliary, the development of the other two functions receives less time and attention. Jung called the function opposite to the dominant the inferior function” (p. 183).

While this implies that there are natural suppression processes within the four personality functions, Jung and Myers believed that these suppression efforts were determined by the individual and could not be forced without serious negative outcomes.

Both Jung and Myers assumed that the individual’s disposition is the source of type. Environmental pressures from the family, school, or society are very important because they can divert a

person from his or her own ideal path of type development. Jung called this process “falsification” and said it can result in neurosis or psychological exhaustion. The advice to counselors using the MBTI, then, is to make an effort to identify the original disposition. The counselor tries to help clients identify and follow their own pathways, not to increase falsification (p. 183).

The effectiveness of the MBTI was best demonstrated when one of the four functions was associated with the personality of the individual, especially in respect to “temperament and/or personality” (Merenda, 1987, p. 367). Historical evidence of exploration into personality types has indicated that the four principle functions clarified by Jung and developed by Myers helped to affirm longstanding beliefs about which traits were the core elements of personality (Merenda, 1987). While there is not a consensus among all theorists active in personality theory and research, a popular agreement on these four main traits suggests a solid foundation for information and theoretical exploration of personality traits.

#### Criticism of the MBTI

The MBTI as a tool has been criticized by multiple sources. Pittenger (1993) explored the MBTI in his article, “The Utility of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*.” The author acquiesced that while the MBTI had long demonstrated validity in personality research and theory, the validity of this tool was tested using potentially flawed methods. The author writes that:

During the past decade, the test has received considerable attention and use in a variety of applied settings. The unified view



of validation requires that validity be considered as an approach that requires many sources of corroboration. This procedure contrasts with previous procedures that tended to focus on single validation procedures (p. 467).

Essentially, Pittenger (1993) argued that the MBTI had been tested for internal validity through a single-point procedure, and that doing so stacked the deck in its favor. It was therefore necessary to see if the MBTI was able to withstand other forms of validity testing; if the MBTI could withstand these challenges, its validity was preserved by more than one source. Yet if the other testing mechanisms demonstrated that the MBTI lacked validity, then the tool itself was misapplied within research into personality theory (but potentially was still useful as a personality categorization tool).

Pittenger (1993) evaluated prior research on the MBTI and found that the majority of researchers used a single-point comparison to evaluate the scales used to measure the various categories and the personality data derived from its application in testing scenarios. The data derived from the testing procedures was also not supported through a multi-point analysis. Moreover, Pittenger (1993) found that some of the recommended procedures and outcomes may demonstrate inherent flaws in the rationale: for instance, he noted that there were profound ethical applications in using the MBTI as a governing tool for career advisement, as the job placement categories recommended by the MBTI scores may reflect “time-bound population trends and sex differences for professions” (p. 480). Essentially, the MBTI does not take into consideration that

recommendations for professions based on personality type may merely reflect the socio-culturally held beliefs that certain jobs are appropriate for certain people.

Yet others suggest that the MBTI may not be the best or the most accurate personality indicator tool, but it has other features that make it attractive to use within sample populations. In a literature overview on the MBTI, Mccauley (1990) suggested that the MBTI was sufficient for use among guidance counselors and other busy working professionals whose obligations may touch upon personality research but do not focus exclusively on it.

#### Teacher Shortages in Education

Teacher turnover and teacher shortages are two of the most serious problems facing modern public education (Ingersoll, 2001). Terry (1997) has identified that “up to 40 percent of U.S. teachers will not be teaching until retirement” (p. 1). Ingersoll (2002) found that retirement actually comprises a “relatively minor” aspect of teacher loss, and the two main factors reported by former teachers as the reasons for leaving their respective jobs were “dissatisfaction” and the decision to enter into more rewarding career fields (p. 16). Financial concerns were not listed as a primary reason for leaving teaching.

Implications for teacher shortages are profound: the loss of the professional development and the valuable experience found within teachers who are active, competent professionals is merely one aspect of the problem, for schools are then asked to replace those teachers who leave the school environment before retirement (Ingersoll, 2002). Attrition among educators

forces schools to scramble to meet their personnel requirements, and schools are often forced to settle for professionals who are professionally qualified to meet the requirements of the school but may lack experience; conversely, teachers who have experience but do not meet the certification requirements of the school may be let go or not hired in the first place (Ingersoll, 2002).

A lack of qualified educators is also likely to impact the performance of the students, where missing educators are likely to reduce the quality and the consistency of the education provided to students (Ingersoll, 2001). Currently, there is a “revolving door” system in place in which the teachers are recruited to a new teaching establishment but are not likely to stay active within this environment over the long term (Ingersoll, 2001). In addition to the data first identified in *A Nation at Risk* (1983), other researchers have stressed that the shortages of trained, experienced teachers within classrooms is likely to compromise the quality and the consistency of education provided to American students (Fennick, 1992; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll, 2002).

### Burnout and Teaching

When Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence that “all men are created equal,” he was not implying that a sameness exists among individuals. Also, the term “individual” implies inherent differences among people. These differences have been recognized and celebrated for generations. In his Conclusion to his celebrated book, *Walden*, the nineteenth century philosopher Henry David Thoreau wrote: “If a man does not keep pace with his

companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away” (Perkins, 1994, p. 1432). Thoreau, like many others before and since, recognized that one person may utilize certain decision making skills while someone else takes advantage of other skills. Also, one individual may interpret an event in one way while another views the same event quite differently. Just as each personality differs, so do the factors that influence people. Some are affected by job burnout while others work for years without any negative impacts.

Friedman (1993) defined burnout as “exhaustion, negative self-evaluation (non-accomplishment), and negative attitudes towards students” (§ 4). Data from Friedman’s study revealed that the desire to leave work and depersonalization, together with emotional exhaustion are the core meaning of burnout. However, Friedman also mentioned that some researchers believe that depersonalization is a defense or coping mechanism; in which case, the core of burnout is emotional exhaustion.

Burnout is common within the helping professions (Toscano & Ponterdolph, 1998). Burnout has been directly linked to the quality and the consistency of the work performed within a specific environment, and has also been identified as a component of attrition. It has been noted by multiple researchers that reducing the causes of burnout may directly correlate to improved retention rates among teachers. It has also been noted that reducing the causes of burnout may improve the working conditions for educators, help improve job satisfaction, and increase the quality and the consistency of the work

performed by the educator. Here, the connection with emotional exhaustion is clear, where the ongoing, continuous tasks required of the individual within the workplace are directly correlated to emotional exhaustion. For example, physicians working with young, terminally-ill children are more likely to suffer from emotional exhaustion than physicians working with healthy persons, as those who work with sick children are in a position to watch them grow progressively worse and die.

In contrast, Friedman and Farber (1992) found that teachers who feel satisfied with their work are least likely to feel burned out, and those who perceive their work environment as supportive experience lower levels of work stress and burnout (Sarros & Sarros, 1992). Abel and Sewell (1999) looked at another aspect of the school environment and found that teachers in urban environments suffered higher levels of stress from poor working conditions and poor staff relations than do those in rural environments.

### Burnout, Emotional Exhaustion, and Its Effects

Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment are identified as components of burnout (Friesen, Prokop, & Sarros, 1988; Maslach, 2003). Emotional exhaustion is representative of feelings of overextension and exhaustion caused by daily work pressures, especially among those involved in the helping service professions. Depersonalization refers to the development of negative attitudes and impersonal responses towards coworkers, and personal accomplishment refers to a deflated sense of

personal achievement and diminished self-esteem (Friesen, Prokop, and Sarros, 1988).

Both individual and situational factors contribute to teacher burnout (Brissie et al., 1988). Burnout is often caused by high levels of prolonged stress related to inordinate time demands, inadequate collegial relationships, large class size, lack of resources, isolation, fear of violence, role ambiguity, and limited promotional opportunities. Friesen, Prokop, and Sarros (1988) found that the following conditions lead to emotional exhaustion: overall work stress (including disciplining students and meeting their needs, in-school concerns such as class size, split grades, shortage of time, policies and expectations of central office, changing curricula) and satisfaction with status and recognition (including feedback, a diminished self-concept, attitudes of parents and the public, and relationships). They also found that “depersonalization and personal accomplishment were related to a failure of the job to satisfy the individual motivational needs of recognition, feedback, and job challenge” (p. 17).

Burnout can produce both physical and behavioral effects. Freudenberger (1974) listed physical signs for burnout that included “feeling[s] of exhaustion and fatigue, being unable to shake a lingering cold, suffering from frequent headaches and gastrointestinal disturbances, sleeplessness and shortness of breath” (p. 160). He also discussed several behavioral signs of burnout: angering quickly, responding with irritation and frustration, crying too easily, yelling, screaming, possessing suspicious and negative attitudes, blocking progress, appearing depressed, keeping to oneself, spending more time at work

accomplishing less and less, and demonstrating paranoia, stubbornness, inflexibility, overconfidence, and excessive rigidity. Freudenberger also mentioned that someone suffering from burnout might use drugs and/or alcohol in an effort to cope with his or her psychological distress.

Burnout must also be recognized for what it is not. Bakker, Schaufeli, Demerouti, Janssen, and Van Der Hulst (2000) found that, though burnout and depression are related, the concepts are distinct. While burnout is work-related, depression is life encompassing. Depression also has more serious consequences than burnout; this is remarkable in that the negative outcomes of burnout are themselves serious. In contrast, depression has the potential to seriously undermine the health and well-being of those affected by it until it passes or until psychological treatment is received, where burnout can be resolved quickly through leaving the job. It is this latter point that is significant to the current research effort, as burnout is often identified as similar to depression in respect to its immediate physiological impact. An employee's decision to leave a job or a profession may be done as a means of gaining control over these powerful, unwanted feelings and may be seen as an unavoidable choice in the eyes of the affected party.

#### Common Causes of Burnout and Groups Commonly Affected by Burnout

As in other human services careers, burnout impairs employee performance in teachers and has repercussions on classroom performance (Friesen et al., 1988; Huberman, 1993). These impairments include irritability, exhaustion, cynicism, criticism, depersonalized relations, detachment, a more

conventional and rigid approach to teaching, low morale, absenteeism, and high job turnover. Friedman (1991) added:

The overt manifestations of teacher burnout are generally intense reactions of anger, anxiety, restlessness, depression, tiredness, boredom, cynicism, guilt feelings, psychosomatic symptoms, and in extreme cases, nervous breakdown. At the professional level, one may observe a significant decline in the capacity to perform in teaching, extended absenteeism due to illness, and early retirement (p. 325).

In teaching, burnout is routinely observed among new and experienced educators. It is also identified as a persistent problem (Fennick, 1992). Reglin and Reitzammer (1998) have suggested that the majority of emotional problems that are faced by teachers are stress-related, where the working conditions in teaching comprise a high-stress environment with little to no mechanisms available to reduce stress. The authors note that stress is actually a beneficial response to a threatening situation, wherein specific physiological, psychological, and emotional-behavioral cues are enhanced to better position the person to overcome the threat. Yet over time, “stress is the cause of deteriorating health, lack of productivity, and depression” because the body cannot maintain a heightened focus for prolonged periods of time (Reglin & Reitzammer, 1998; 590). However, while Reglin and Reitzammer (1998) do point out that teachers are highly vulnerable to stress-based scenarios, the authors also note that this occurs “because of bad habits” and that teachers should learn to manage their



stress through improving their own performance and work-related task management skills (p. 590).

Other sources suggest that stress and burnout are most certainly not the result of poorly managed work habits but are instead the result of persistent problems that new and experienced teachers are forced to deal with on a routine basis. Fennick (1992) found in her paper, "Combating New Teacher Burnout: Providing Support Networks for Personal and Professional Growth," that immediate burnout rates peaked during the first five years of a teacher's work experience. Immediate burnout can be distinguished from gradual burnout, as immediate burnout occurs more rapidly as the result of immersion within a specific environment and gradual burnout occurs over time and after there is continued exposure to factors that wear upon the affected person's psyche over time (Gold, 1993). Fennick (1992) identified that younger teachers appeared to be more vulnerable to immediate burnout as the result of their idealism; the requirements of the workplace did not meet their expectations and many young teachers are unable to reconcile the incongruities between their expectations for teaching and their actual work experiences. The author noted:

Following a mixture of successes and frustrations, student teachers end their internship on a high note, leaving their schools with accolades from students, cooperating teachers, school administrators, and university supervisors. They are ready to effect change (p. 5).

Yet as time progresses and the inexperienced teacher is engaged within his or her new work environment, “myriad forces will undermine their efforts” (p. 5). Fennick (1992) presents a grim reality in which the inexperienced teacher is confronted with an unforgiving administrative system, is without support from his or her peers, and is constantly placed into conflict with parents. Add to this the problems generated by some students and the inexperienced teacher is likely to suffer from work-related stress.

These frequently-documented causes of teacher frustration are discouragingly complex and, from all indications, not soon to be remedied. Student teachers are often, and wisely, advised to combat the resulting stress and burnout by developing collegiality with other faculty. [...] However, too often heavy workloads, or embarrassment about mistakes or ignorance, keep new teachers from reaching out (p. 7).

Fennick (1992) finds that the most serious problems result from a perpetually changing work environment in which all participants are asked to achieve specific goals without adequate support. The expectations placed upon all teachers can be profound, creating conditions in which “new teachers find that, in their new environment, they are surrounded by enemies. Students, parents, administrators, and colleges blame them for student failures” (p. 7). These conditions are continuous and – no matter how hard the new teacher tries to improve things – are not alleviated. The outcome is a setting in which the new teacher suffers from work-related stress, and can succumb to burnout.

Friedman (1991) finds that there are specific factors within schools that correspond to burnout for new teachers and experienced teachers alike. Some schools, Friedman (1991) notes, appear to manifest those factors that promote burnout at greater rates than others; teachers employed in such burnout-prone environments are more likely to undergo attrition sooner after their initial hiring or experience the negative effects of burnout for longer periods of time. Of note is the *personality perspective*, which Friedman (1991) identifies as a significant component of burnout, as this is “the profile of the worker with a higher propensity to burn out, and those personality factors and background variables of the worker that may explain a proclivity toward burnout” (p. 325). These include the following:

Male teachers report higher levels of burnout than female teachers do. Teachers with a higher level of education report higher levels of burnout. Burnout rises with teachers’ age (and years of experience), it reaches a peak with the age group of 41 to 45 years (20 to 24 years of experience) and then it declines” (p. 325).

This citation, of course, contradicts Fennick’s (1992) research into burnout experienced by new teachers, but this can be justified if immediate burnout and gradual burnout are clarified; neither Friedman (1991) nor Fennick (1992) makes such a distinction in their research.

#### Personality Type and Resistance to Burnout

In the literature on burnout, there is a shortage of information regarding the profiles of “survivors,” or those teachers who are able to overcome these

negative conditions and remain active as teachers (McEnany, 1986; 83). Early research into educators who do not burn out from teaching despite continued immersion in the same environments as teachers who do suffer from burnout suggests that there may be personality characteristics that help buffer the teacher against the negative factors found within the work environment. In a quasi-experimental study of 34 teachers from five disparate geographic regions, McEnany (1986) sought to determine whether there were personality profiles that were associated with greater likelihood of retention. The author used a template provided by another researcher in which three core personality traits had been identified as likely correlates to a “survivor” profile, which were:

- 1) “Have a strong commitment to self. They are achievement-oriented leaders in their fields who acknowledge a strong support system among peers and family;
- 2) “Have an attitude of vigor towards the environment. They expressed an active involvement in their personal and professional life.
- 3) “Have an internal locus of control. They express a sense of control over their lives” (p. 83).

Using 26 follow-up questions, McEnany (1986) tested these three core principles and sought to elaborate upon their significance. One of the key findings from her research is that the teachers’ techniques were not remarkable, but the personality of the teachers appeared to be of greater importance in cultivating resiliency. She concluded that “teachers who maintain a dynamic career for an extended period of time are people who have particular attitudes rather than

particular skills” (p. 84). Yet while the results of this early study seem promising, McEnany (1986) does not describe either her methods or the data collected in detail, which reduces the use of this research effort as a model.

Other, more recent research into personality type and the helping industries has helped to clarify how and to what extent the various personality types interact with work-related stressors. An exploration of burnout and personality type in nursing by Toscando and Ponterdolph (1998) sought to determine if “high levels of hardiness positively correlate with low levels of burnout in the critical care setting?” (p. 32L). Here, “hardiness” can be identified as a descriptive phrase similar to McEnany’s (1986) use of the “survivor” phrase, where it is used to describe a person who is less likely to burn out despite being immersed in the same conditions that may contribute to burnout in most people. The research was conducted to identify whether hardiness was a personality trait that could be identified within a specific population, and if so, how and to what extent it could be influenced in the environment or among those persons who did not demonstrate hardiness within their own personality traits or personality profiles.

Toscando and Ponterdolph (1998) surveyed 250 critical care nurses in metropolitan hospitals. The instruments used were the “Third Generation Hardiness Test” and the “Maslach Burnout Inventory” (p. 32N). The Maslach Burnout Inventory will be used in the current research study and will be described in detail in the instruments section of Chapter Three. Toscando and Ponterdolph (1998) defined hardiness as a “personality trait that moderates the effects of

stress on health. People with hardy personalities have been shown to encounter less illness, despite the stressful situations they face, because they possess three adaptive characteristics: commitment, control, and challenge” (p. 32N). The research did not identify a strong correlative link between personality (e.g.: hardiness) and burnout, which caused the authors to comment that “burnout may not be related to the nurse’s psychosocial construct” (p. 32N). The researchers did, however, note that there were ongoing themes that suggested that factors of burnout did receive different responses among some persons, where “although this study did not indicate a correlation between personal hardiness and burnout in the critical care areas, factors *contributing* to burnout still exist. The morale of a critical care setting and the economic stability of an institution are dependent upon its nursing staff’s abilities and effectiveness” (pp. 32N-32R). The outcome is one in which the personality of the worker may play a contributing part in the impact of burnout, but in the context of the current study it remains unclear how this can occur or to what it will occur.

### Leadership and Burnout

The Maslach Burnout Inventory, an instrument commonly used to measure burnout, considers burnout a variable that consists of feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. These trends have been affirmed throughout the literature. The information on burnout and the relationships between burnout and a lack of support strongly indicate that burnout is affected by the quality of leadership available to the employees within the work environment.

*Teacher Satisfaction in Georgia and the Nation: Status and Trends* (1980)

states that school systems can “implement strategies to minimize teacher burnout” and that administrators from district and school levels “must recognize the existence of burnout and implement changes designed to improve teacher morale” (p. 17). Firstly, principals should become aware of the morale in their buildings and of the nature and sources of teacher burnout. Effective schools research points out the primary importance of the principal in the building. School administrators must also ensure that teachers clearly understand their duties and responsibilities. Providing clear goals and expectations, open channels of communication, reinforcement, and feedback aid in establishing the security needed by many for job satisfaction. Building level administrators should also provide consistent student disciplinary procedures and opportunities for interaction among teachers (Owens, Mundy, & Harrison, 1980).

System level administrators should consider policies to reduce teacher stress such as decreasing class size, raising salaries, providing appropriate resources, and supplying clerical assistance or reducing paperwork (Owens, Mundy, & Harrison, 1980). Systems can also schedule in-service programs designed to reduce teacher stress and increase job satisfaction; and, at all times the school system should solicit community support.

Teacher preparation programs should also prepare prospective teachers to deal with the realities of the school environment and the possibility of teacher burnout. Prospective teachers must ultimately take responsibility for their own happiness. They must realize that the demands of the job will be many and that

teaching is an isolated career. There are limitations imposed by position, by environment, and by personal beliefs that must be accepted in order to increase job satisfaction and reduce the occurrence of teacher burnout.

It is true that many teachers do not exhibit characteristics of burnout and that many schools can be classified as low-burnout environments; however, for every one teacher who is affected, numerous students undergo less than optimal educational experiences. The implication for the educational profession then is clear. In order for students to receive the best quality educations, teachers must practice at their highest skill levels, free of burnout.

### Summary

The literature on burnout strongly suggests that emotional exhaustion and similar psychological factors play a significant role in whether a teacher is able to remain employed and active as a conscientious, committed teacher. Burnout is most likely caused through environmental factors, which can have a profound outcome on the attitude and the capabilities of the teacher and the teacher's willingness to remain a participant in the helping professions in general and education in particular. Research into personality type and personality traits suggests that there may be a "survivor" type that is more resilient to the causes of burnout and therefore less likely to leave the teaching profession due to burnout-related factors.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The study of personality types and their relationship to burnout in teacher populations can be accomplished through examining professionals with teaching experience and identifying the impact of stressors upon them. The purpose of this study was to determine whether teacher burnout and individual personality are related in a select population of Georgia middle school teachers. Teachers who exhibit effects of burnout can negatively impact students and student achievement. In this era of increased accountability, educators must maximize every possible influence upon students and their achievement. To capitalize on their skills, to realize their true strengths, and to avoid or decrease burnout, school leaders and teachers alike should learn to recognize and minimize symptoms of teacher burnout.

As an administrator, the researcher feels a great sense of obligation to students and faculty. Knowing that school programs are important but that the real business of school is carried on in classrooms, this researcher believes that the most valuable administrators are facilitators. Increased knowledge of faculty members would allow the researcher to serve them more effectively, thus positively impacting students in turn. Realizing this strong sense of obligation, the researcher, through this study, has sought to provide information that may help teachers to realize a greater awareness of themselves and others so that students may be the ultimate beneficiaries.

This chapter presents both the procedures used to gather data for this study and the methods used to analyze the data in answering the research questions. This chapter (a) restates the research questions, (b) explores the methods used to conduct the study, (c) describes the participants, (d) presents details of the instruments used to collect data, and (e) defines the processes used to analyze the data.

### Research Questions

The researcher addresses the following overarching research question: Is there a relationship between individual teacher personality and teacher burnout? Additionally, the following sub questions will guide the research:

1. To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to personality type?
2. To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to teachers' levels and areas of burnout?

### Research Design

This particular portion of the research is to provide information regarding the design of the study. A quantitative research method was used to conduct this study. In addition to a demographic questionnaire, two instruments were utilized to gather information regarding the participants relative to their personality predispositions and burnout symptoms. Creswell (2003) describes this type research: "A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of

trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of the population. From sample results, the researcher generalizes or makes claims about the population” (p. 153). The particular type of quantitative research to be presented is ex-post-facto research because no variables will be manipulated. This type of research is used widely in the social sciences and lends itself perfectly to this study. As Sprinthall (1994) states,

the researcher does not manipulate the independent variable. Rather, the independent variable is assigned. That is, the subjects are measured on some trait they already possess and then are assigned to categories on the basis of that trait. These trait differences (independent variable) are then compared with measures that the researcher takes on some other dimension (dependent variable) p. 247.

### Population

The population selected for this study consisted of middle school teachers from three rural public schools in central Georgia. Each of these schools represents a different school district within District E of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals. The selection of three schools allowed the researcher to collect data from an adequate number of participants.

### Participants

In order to explore the relationship between individual teacher personality and teacher burnout, the researcher gathered information from teachers in three rural public middle schools within central Georgia. Each of these schools serves grades six through eight, operates in grade-level teams according to the middle

school philosophy, and has a student population of fewer than 1000. The researcher administered the surveys at school-wide faculty meetings in each of the schools.

One hundred eight total subjects participated in the research. Participants selected for the study conformed to the following selection criteria:

- The candidate was certified as a teacher;
- The candidate was employed as a teacher within one of the three public schools selected for the study;
- The candidate worked directly with students, parents, other teachers, and administrators on a routine basis (e.g.: contact must occur at least once per day with two or more of these parties); and
- The candidate had not announced his or her decision to leave the school (e.g., retire or quit) at the time the survey was administered.

All participants also completed forms identifying their demographic information.

Each participant was given a brief description of his/her individual personality type and an explanation of how personalities affect committees, classrooms, and other work-related groups.

#### Sample

The sample was non-random and purposefully selected all certified teachers within the schools. A purposive sample was utilized to select the three schools from District E of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals.

## Instrumentation

After permission was obtained from the Internal Review Board of Georgia Southern University and building principals, the researcher visited each of the three schools to administer the instruments during a faculty meeting. The researcher administered the instruments to all certified teachers who attended the after school meeting. Surveys were coded so the personality, burnout, and demographics instruments could be matched. Participants placed completed matched forms in an envelope and returned these to the researcher. No identifying information was expected on the forms.

### The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

*The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* was initially developed in 1942; it has subsequently gone through multiple minor revisions and two major revisions. Although there is no professional or personal differentiation within these instruments as occurs in the *Maslach Burnout Inventory*, there are multiple forms of the MBTI, and these can be applied in different settings. *The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M* (MBTI) was used to determine individual teacher personality types. This form of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator contains 93 forced-choice, word-pair items. Teachers were able to complete this survey in 15-25 minutes. The object of the MBTI was to determine the participant's preference on each of the four following dichotomies so that these results can be reported as a four-letter type: (1) extraversion or introversion, (2) sensing or intuition, (3) thinking or feeling, and (4) judging or perceiving. Results were

intended to be interpreted as whole types, and for the purposes of this research the 16 possible combinations were used as personality types.

The reliability of Form M of the MBTI has been reported using a variety of methods. Using a national sample of 3,036 participants, the *MBTI Manual* (2003) reported internal consistency reliability estimates for each of the four dichotomies using split-half reliability and coefficient alpha. Table 1 shows the Internal Consistency of Form M based on split-half correlations. In addition, according to the *MBTI Manual* (2003), “there is little or no difference between coefficients determined by the split-half and coefficient alpha methods” (p. 161).

Table 1	Internal Consistency of Form M Continuous Scores Based on Split-Half Correlations				
Sample	N	E-I	S-N	T-F	J-P
National Sample	3,036				
Logical Split Half					
X Half		.90	.92	.91	.92
Y Half		.91	.92	.90	.92
Consecutive Split Half					
X Half		.91	.92	.89	.92
Y Half		.90	.92	.92	.92
Word Pairs		.91	.93	.92	.94

Another method of reliability is test-retest reliability. This measure is an estimate of how stable a characteristic is over time. Form M of the MBTI, according to the manual (2003), shows consistency over time, with levels of agreement much higher than could be attributed to chance. If subjects report a change in type, more often than not, it is in just one preference and in a scale where the original preference was low.

The validity of the MBTI is determined by its ability to demonstrate relationships and outcomes predicted by Jung's theory of psychological types. Both the validity on the separate preference scales and the validity of the whole types or particular combination of preferences have been used in establishing the validity of the MBTI. The *MBTI Manual* (2003) includes the following:

"Correlations of the four preferences scales with a variety of scales from other instruments support the predictions of type theory regarding the meaning of and the behaviors believed to be associated with the four dichotomies" (p. 219). Also included in the manual is data to support the validity of whole types based on original analyses of a national sample.

#### The Maslach Burnout Inventory

The *Maslach Educator's Survey* is an instrument that is part of the series of burnout inventory surveys developed by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson. The original tool was developed in 1986 and, while it has undergone revisions, is still identified by the term provided to the original instrument. The instruments in the Maslach Burnout Inventory series are designed to be population-specific and target the lived professional experiences (and, to a lesser degree, some personal experiences) of persons working within a specific population.

The *Maslach Educator's Survey* (MBI-ES) will be utilized to assess the three aspects of the burnout syndrome: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (Dp), and lack of personal accomplishment (PA). According to the *Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual* (1996), the three subscales of burnout

are defined as follows: (1) Emotional exhaustion is the tired and fatigued feeling that develops as emotional energies are drained, (2) Depersonalization is the type of burnout experienced when educators no longer have positive feelings about their students, and (3) Lack of Personal Accomplishment is the feeling educators get when they no longer think they are contributing to student's development.

The 22 items on the MBI-ES were designed to measure hypothetical aspects of the burnout syndrome and are written in the form of statements about personal feelings or attitudes. Of these 22 statements, numbers 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16, and 20 measure emotional exhaustion, numbers 5, 10, 11, 15, and 22 apply to depersonalization, and numbers 4, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, and 21 deal with lack of personal accomplishment. This survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Results were then hand-scored.

Validity and reliability of the MBI-ES were substantiated in two studies. Factor analytic studies by Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) and by Gold (1984) support the three-factor structure of the MBI-ES. In regard to reliability, Iwanicki and Schwab report Cronback alpha estimates of .90 for EE, .76 for Dp, and .76 for PA. Gold, respectively, reports estimates of .88, .74, and .72. Mean scores for teachers, in comparison to other occupational groups, tend to be slightly higher in emotional exhaustion, substantially higher in depersonalization, and lower in the area of lack of personal accomplishment.



### Demographic Questionnaire

In addition to the above two instruments, each teacher completed a short demographics questionnaire (Appendix A). The information collected in this form was used for the purposes of identifying how and to what extent demographic trends were represented within the sample population. All information was kept anonymous to preserve confidentiality. Five survey items identified the age, gender, race, work-related experiences, and future plans of the sample population.

### Data Collection

The researcher received approval to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University. An informal telephone call explaining the researcher's plans was made to the school principals to determine the possibility of the school's participation. A formal letter of introduction requesting permission to meet with teachers was sent to the principal of the selected schools. If the principals did not contact the researcher, a follow-up telephone call was made by the researcher to each of the principals assuring their assent for participation and scheduling time for the meeting in their schools. Data was collected during March 2008.

The instruments were distributed during a scheduled meeting of all certified teaching faculty. Potential candidates for participation in the study were given the consent form, the three instruments, and an unsealed, unmarked envelope. The researcher then provided a brief introduction and instructions that described each of the documents and requested that the candidates not write on

the envelope or provide any personal identifying information on any of the documents, but merely complete the consent form and the surveys. Upon completion of the instruments, participants were asked to seal the three instruments inside the envelope. The researcher collected the envelopes as participants left the meeting and sealed these in a larger container.

The researcher then engaged in the data analysis process. Hand scoring was possible for both the MBTI and the *Maslach Educators' Survey*. Results were analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, measures of central tendency, and variability. In order to achieve equal distribution and representation of the data, the Statistical Package for Social Services was utilized as the data analysis tool of choice. The Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS) is a low-cost program developed for widespread data analysis use on conventional home computing platforms, and has been used in multiple research studies as the data analysis processing system of choice. These factors made it an ideal choice for use in the current study.

### Response Rate

One hundred percent of those who attended the meeting were eligible to participate in the study. One hundred eleven faculty attended the meetings, and 108 were utilized in the study, 97% of those attending. Three sets of instruments were not utilized because they were incomplete. However, this number was not one hundred percent of the certified teachers from each faculty. Faculty members who were absent from school on the particular day that the researcher

gathered data or faculty members who had responsibilities with students after school were not in attendance and did not, therefore, participate in the study. The response rate from each of the participating schools was still 89% of all certified teachers.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, measures of central tendency, and variability were used to summarize responses to both of the instruments. The researcher utilized the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software package to analyze the collected data. This software was utilized to efficiently and accurately analyze the data that was gathered during the research process of this study. SPSS was designed to analyze large amounts of quantitative data; thus, it was selected because of the quantitative nature of this study (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 2002).

### Reporting the Data

Data was reported in narrative form as well as in tables. Data from all participants were reported together and not separated into individual school reports since the purpose of the study was to determine personality types and burnout tendencies in Georgia middle school teachers in general rather than personality types and burnout tendencies in teachers from a particular school.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine whether individual teacher personality and burnout are related in teachers from three rural public middle

schools in central Georgia. Also, the researcher related demographic findings to personality type and burnout.

## CHAPTER 4

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

Freudenberger (1974) first identified burnout in 1974 and noted that it could be best defined as “to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources” (p. 159). He believed that “the dedicated and the committed” employees are most prone to experience burnout because they “work too much, too long and too intensely” (p. 161). Freudenberger believed that burnout was common in the helping professions; however, teaching was not associated with the term until years later. Researchers have studied the causes of teacher burnout. Reasons vary and include environmental factors and lack of administrative support (O’Reilly, 2005; Friedman, 1991), student behavior (Bibou-Nakou, Stogiannidou, and Kiosseoglou, 1999; Bryne, 1998), and personal factors such as age (Huberman, 1993), gender (Lunenbergl and Cadavid, 1992; Sarros and Sarros, 1992), and years of experience (Huberman, 1993; Hall, Villeme, and Phillippy, 1989).

The study of personality has a long and, arguably, less-than-scientific history beginning with Hippocrates and continuing until present day. Jung’s *Psychological Types* (1923) ushered in a new era of personality study (Thomson, 1998). Jung’s theory was studied by Isabel Myers and Katherine Briggs and led to the development of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*.

The intent of the current research was to learn whether a link exists between individual teacher personality type and burnout in a selected group of

middle school teachers. By utilizing the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M* and the *Maslach Educator's Survey*, the researcher investigated whether this connection existed. In addition, the demographic questionnaire allowed the researcher to look at relations between certain demographic characteristics, personality type, and burnout. All data collected were self-reported by middle school teachers.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overarching question upon which the research was based was as follows: Is there a relationship between individual teacher personality and teacher burnout? Further defining the research were the following subquestions:

1. To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to personality type?
2. To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to teachers' levels and areas of burnout?

## Research Design

In order to explore the relationship between individual teacher personality and teacher burnout, the researcher gathered data from teachers in three rural public middle schools within central Georgia. Each of these schools serves grades six through eight, operates in grade-level teams according to the middle school philosophy, and has a student population of fewer than 1000. The researcher administered a demographic questionnaire, *The Myers-Briggs Type*

*Indicator, Form M* and the *Maslach Educator's Survey* at school-wide faculty meetings in each of the schools. A quantitative research method was used to conduct this study.

### Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The respondents in this study were teachers from three rural public middle schools in central Georgia. These teachers work in schools that serve grades six through eight, operate in grade-level teams according to the middle school philosophy, and have a student population of fewer than 1000. Of 122 teachers employed in the three schools, 108 subjects were included in the research, a response rate of 88.5 %. Eleven teachers from the three schools were unable to attend the meetings. Three teachers did not complete or return all of the instruments and were therefore not utilized in the study. Each of the 108 respondents conformed to the following selection criteria:

- The candidate was a certified teacher;
- The candidate was employed as a teacher within one of the three public schools selected for the study;
- The candidate worked directly with students, parents, other teachers, and administrators on a routine basis (contact must occur at least once per day with two or more of these parties); and
- The candidate had not announced his or her decision to leave the school (retire or quit) at the time the survey was administered.

The analysis of data concerning research participants was based on the following information. The researcher visited three middle schools located in

District E of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals. At each, the researcher provided for teachers a demographic questionnaire, the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M*, and the *Maslach Educator's Survey*.

Analysis of the descriptive demographics revealed more information about the 108 teachers who participated in the research (see Table 1). The majority of respondents, 84 or 77.8%, were female. Seventy five (69.4%) of the participants were between the ages of 31-50. Twenty four or 22.2% were over the age of 51, and nine were between the ages of 21-30, comprising 8.3% of the participants. The racial composition of the participants was 80 (74.1%) white, 24 (22.2%) black, and four Asian or Other. Participants were fairly evenly divided among categories indicating years of experience except for the 25+ years category that included only eight (7.4%) of respondents. The degree levels reported were as follows: 34 (31.5%) hold Bachelor's degrees, 41 (38%) have Master's degrees, 32 (29.6%) have Educational Specialist's degrees, and one participant has a doctorate.



Table 1

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Age, Gender, Race, Years of Experience, and Degree Level (N=108)*

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Female	84	77.8
Male	24	22.2
Age		
21-30	9	8.3
31-40	42	38.9
41-50	33	30.6
51-60	23	21.3
61+	1	.9
Race		
Black	24	22.2
White	80	74.1
Asian, Hispanic, Other	4	3.7
Years of Experience		
1-2	16	14.8
3-5	22	20.4
6-15	43	39.8
16-25	19	17.6
25+	8	7.4
Degree Level		
Bachelor's	34	31.5
Master's	41	38.0
Educational Specialist's	32	29.6
Doctorate	1	.9

Because the findings and discussion for each subquestion would lead to a more complete answer of the overarching research question, the subquestions were looked at first rather than the order that might be customary. This development of findings and the discussion of those findings led themselves to a fuller understanding of the topic.

#### Subquestion 1

*Subquestion 1: To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to personality type?*

#### Discussion

By utilizing *The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, the respondents determined personality by four preferences which concern a person's use of perception and judgment. An individual's perception determines what he/she sees in any given situation and his/her judgment determines the choices he/she makes in dealing with the situation. An individual prefers either extroversion or introversion (E or I). This preference affects the person's choice to focus on the outer world or on the world of ideas. An individual who selects people as a source or energy is a probable extrovert, while one who selects solitude in order to reenergize is a probable introvert.

The second preference involves sensing or intuition (S or N); this affects the individual's choice "to use one kind of perception instead of the other when either could be used" (Myers, 1980). Those individuals who are sensing are realistic and utilize their five senses in interpreting the world around them.

Intuitives often read between the lines and are comfortable when mere facts are not available.

The third preference is thinking or feeling (T or F), affecting a person's choice "to use one kind of judgment instead of the other when either could be used" (Myers, 1980). Thinkers like decisions that are impersonal, logical, and objective, but those classified as Feelers make decisions based on personal judgment and subjectivity.

The fourth preference is that of judgment or perception (J or P). This preference affects a person's choice of whether to use the judging or the perceptive attitude. Judging types prefer closure while those who are perceiving types like their options to remain "fluid and open" (Keirsey and Bates, 1978).

Table 2 reveals reported personality types as taken from the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M*. Letters indicate the following characteristics: E/I – Extrovert/Introvert, S/N – Sensing/Intuition, T/F – Thinking/Feeling, and J/P – Judging/Perceptive. Of the sixteen personality types recognized, only the INTP was not represented among the respondents. Also, the personality type categories of INFP, ENTJ, INTJ, and ENTP had only one representative each. The majority of participants, 69%, fell into five personality categories, including ENFP, ESTJ, ISTJ, ESFJ, and ISFJ. According to this sample, the majority of teachers were identified themselves as extroverted, sensing, feeling, and judging. The remaining 31% were scattered among the remaining ten classifications. In order not to skew the results of the statistical analysis, the personality types that were represented by just one respondent have been

deleted from the research that follows. Thus, of the 16 personality types recognized by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, only 11 will be discussed, and 104 of the original 108 participants will be considered in the remaining analyses.

In addition, some of the categories within the questions on the demographics questionnaire have been collapsed in order to have enough respondents within each category and not to skew the statistical analysis. The five categories of age have been reduced into three. The new age categories are: 21-40, 41-50, and 51+. Within the demographic variable of race, only Black and White are considered. The five original categories of years of experience have been combined into the following new categories: 1-5 years, 6-15 years, and 16+ years. When considering types of degrees, the original four categories have been combined into three. The Educational Specialists degree and the Doctorate have been combined into one category.

Table 2

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Personality Types (N=108)*

Type	N	%
ENFJ	7	6.5
INFJ	3	2.8
ENFP	12	11.1
INFP	1	.9
ESFP	9	8.3
ISFP	4	3.7
ESTJ	12	11.1
ISTJ	17	15.7
ESTP	3	2.8
ISTP	3	2.8
ESFJ	16	14.8
ISFJ	18	16.7
ENTJ	1	.9
INTJ	1	.9
ENTP	1	.9
INTP	0	0

*Note:* E-I = Extroversion-Introversion, N-S = Intuitive-Sensing, T-F = Thinking-Feeling, J-P = Judging-Perceiving

Utilizing the demographic information provided by the participants, the researcher looked at personality type and gender (see Table 3). Eighty females and 24 males were considered in the research. Of the 80 females, 63.8% fell into four personality categories, including ENFP, ISTJ, ESFJ, and ISFJ. While Extroversion and Introversion were closely divided in this group, the large majority were sensing, feeling, and judging. The remaining 36.2% fell within the

other eleven categories that were represented. In regards to the male participants, 62.5% were represented by three personality types: ESTJ, ISTJ, and ISFJ. Males respondents tended to be largely introverted and thinking, but males were even more closely allied in their characteristics of sensing and judging. The remaining 37.5% fell within the six other types that were represented by males in the study. When the researcher ran a chi square analysis linking gender and personality type, no significant relationship existed between gender and personality type ( $X^2 = 17.21$ ,  $p = .07$ ).

Table 3

*Frequency Distribution of Gender by Personality Types (N=104)*

Type	Female %	Male %
ENFJ	7.5	4.2
INFJ	3.8	0
ENFP	12.5	8.3
ESFP	10.0	4.2
ISFP	3.8	4.2
ESTJ	8.8	20.8
ISTJ	13.8	25.0
ESTP	1.2	8.3
ISTP	1.2	8.3
ESFJ	20.0	0
ISFJ	17.5	16.7

*Note:* Females N=80, Males N=24

E-I = Extroversion-Introversion, N-S = Intuitive-Sensing, T-F = Thinking-Feeling, J-P = Judging-Perceiving

Utilizing the demographic information provided by the participants, the researcher then looked at personality type and age (see Table 4). The forty eight participants between the ages of 21-40 were represented by within all eleven personality types. Two of the eleven personality categories were not represented in the 41-50 year old group and in the 51+ year old group. The researcher ran a chi square analysis to determine whether age and personality type were linked and found no significant relationship between age and personality type ( $X^2 = 23.86$ ,  $p = .249$ ).

Table 4

*Frequency Distribution of Age by Personality Types (N=104)*

Type	21-40 %	41-50 %	51+ %
ENFJ	2.1	6.2	16.7
INFJ	2.1	6.2	0
ENFP	12.5	9.4	12.5
ESFP	6.2	15.6	4.2
ISFP	2.1	6.2	4.2
ESTJ	18.8	6.2	4.2
ISTJ	20.8	15.6	8.3
ESTP	4.2	0	4.2
ISTP	6.2	0	0
ESFJ	10.4	18.8	20.8
ISFJ	14.6	15.6	25.0

*Note:* E-I = Extroversion-Introversion, N-S = Intuitive-Sensing, T-F = Thinking-Feeling, J-P = Judging-Perceiving

The next demographic variable the researcher studied was race (see Table 5.). The 22 black respondents reported nine of the eleven personality types. More than 77% of these respondents categorized themselves as ENFP, ESFP, ISTJ, ESFJ, or ISFJ. The 78 white participants were spread throughout the eleven personality categories. More than seventy percent of these were ENFP, ESTJ, ISTJ, ESFJ, or ISFJ. When a chi square analysis of race and personality type was run, the researcher found that no relationship exists between personality type and race ( $X^2 = 4.34$ ,  $p. = .931$ ).

Table 5

*Frequency Distribution of Race by Personality Types (N=104)*

Type	Black %	White %
ENFJ	9.1	6.4
INFJ	0	3.8
ENFP	13.6	11.5
ESFP	13.6	7.7
ISFP	4.5	3.8
ESTJ	4.5	12.8
ISTJ	13.6	15.4
ESTP	4.5	2.6
ISTP	0	3.8
ESFJ	13.6	15.4
ISFJ	22.7	16.7

*Note:* Black N=22, White N = 78

E-I = Extroversion-Introversion, N-S = Intuitive-Sensing, T-F = Thinking-Feeling, J-P = Judging-Perceiving



The fourth demographic variable that the researcher studied was years of experience (see Table 6). Thirty-six respondents (34.6%) reported 1-5 years of experience and were spread among eleven personality types. Forty-one participants reported 6-15 years of experience; these teachers were dispersed among ten personality types. The 27 teachers with 16+ years of experience report nine different types. Utilizing SPSS, the researcher performed a chi square analysis to determine the relationship between years of experience as a teacher and personality type and found that no significant relationship exists.

Table 6

*Frequency Distribution of Years of Experience by Personality Types (N=104)*

Type	1-5 %	6-15 %	16+ %
ENFJ	5.6	4.9	11.1
INFJ	5.6	2.4	0
ENFP	13.9	12.2	7.4
ESFP	13.9	2.4	11.1
ISFP	2.8	4.9	3.7
ESTJ	8.3	19.5	3.7
ISTJ	19.4	17.1	11.1
ESTP	5.6	0	3.7
ISTP	2.8	4.9	0
ESFJ	5.6	17.1	25.9
ISFJ	16.7	14.6	22.2

*Note:* 1-5 N=36, 6-15 N=41, 16+ N=27

E-I = Extroversion-Introversion, N-S = Intuitive-Sensing, T-F = Thinking-Feeling, J-P = Judging-Perceiving

The final demographic element that the researcher studied in relation to personality type was degree level (see Table 7). Thirty-two respondents held Bachelors degrees; these teachers reported nine different personality types. The 40 teachers who held Masters degrees reported personality types within each of the 11 categories. The 32 participants holding Specialists or Doctorate degrees were split into ten types. A chi square analysis was also run, using SPSS, to determine whether a link exists between degree level and personality type. The researcher found that no significant relationship exists ( $X^2 = 20.82$ ,  $p = .408$ ).

Table 7

*Frequency Distribution of Degree Level by Personality Types (N=104)*

Type	Bachelors %	Masters %	Specialists/Doctorate %
ENFJ	9.4	5.0	6.2
INFJ	0	2.5	6.2
ENFP	18.8	12.5	3.1
ESFP	9.4	7.5	9.4
ISFP	0	2.5	9.4
ESTJ	12.5	12.5	9.4
ISTJ	6.2	12.5	31.2
ESTP	3.1	2.5	3.1
ISTP	3.1	5.0	0
ESFJ	15.6	20.0	9.4
ISFJ	21.9	17.5	12.5

*Note:* Bachelors N= 32, Masters N= 40, Specialists/Doctorate N= 32

E-I = Extroversion-Introversion, N-S = Intuitive-Sensing, T-F = Thinking-Feeling, J-P = Judging-Perceiving

## Subquestion 2

*Subquestion 2: To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to teachers' levels and areas of burnout?*

The *Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual* gives the following scores regarding K-12 teachers' ranges of experienced burnout.

Table 8

### *Categorization of MBI Scores*

	Low (lower third)	Average (middle third)	High (upper third)
EE	≤16	17-26	≥27
DP	≤8	9-13	≥14
PA	≥37	36-31	≤30

*Note:* (EE) Emotional Exhaustion, (DP) Depersonalization, and (PA) Personal Accomplishment

Analyses for participants' responses to the *Maslach Educator's Survey* are revealed in Table 9. Responses for Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Lack of Personal Accomplishment are included along with the scores that fell within the low, medium, and high range for each category. The Emotional Exhaustion (EE) subscale assesses feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. The Depersonalization (DP) subscale measures and unfeeling and impersonal response toward those with whom one works, and the Personal Accomplishment (PA) subscale measure feelings of competence

and successful achievement in one's work. Each subscale is considered separately when determining burnout.

Burnout is conceptualized as a continuous variable, ranging from low to moderate to high degrees of feelings experienced. A high degree of burnout is reflected in high scores on Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization and in low scores on Personal Accomplishment. An average degree of burnout is reflected in average scores on the three subscales, and a low degree of burnout is demonstrated by low scores in Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization and high scores on Personal Accomplishment. A low degree of burnout has also been theorized as indicating one's engagement with his/her work, a state that is the opposite of burnout.

Of the original 108 participants in the current research, 63% scored in the medium and high range for emotional exhaustion, the most common type of teacher burnout. Only 36.1% of scores were in the medium and high range for depersonalization, and 33.3% scored in the medium and high range for lack of personal accomplishment. For low degrees of burnout, teachers would need low scores on the subscales relating to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization; however, a high score on the personal accomplishment subscale would indicate low degrees of burnout.

Table 9

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Burnout Areas and Levels (N=108)*

Burnout	N	%
Emotional Exhaustion		
Low	40	37.0
Medium	29	26.9
High	39	36.1
Depersonalization		
Low	69	63.9
Medium	28	25.9
High	11	10.2
Lack of Personal Accomplishment		
Low	72	66.7
Medium	21	19.4
High	15	13.9

The following descriptive statistics were also gathered in regards to the subscales of burnout. For emotional exhaustion, the minimum score was 2 and the maximum was 46. The mean was 21.3, and the standard deviation was 11.3. On the depersonalization subscale, the minimum and maximum scores ranged from 0 to 26. The mean was 7.2, and the standard deviation was 5.0. The minimum and maximum scores for lack of personal achievement were 21 to 48. The mean was 38.5, and the standard deviation was 6.7.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if a relationship existed between gender and the three burnout subscale scores (see

Table 10). Results revealed a significant difference between males and females in the area of Emotional Exhaustion ( $F= 5.795$ ,  $p=.018$ ). Females revealed greater Emotional Exhaustion. However, there were no significant differences in the areas of Depersonalization ( $F= .357$ ,  $p=.552$ ) and Lack of Personal Accomplishment ( $F=.175$ ,  $p=.676$ ).

Table 10

*Descriptive Statistics of Gender by Burnout Areas*

Burnout	Female Mean SD		Male Mean SD	
Emotional Exhaustion	22.7	10.9	16.6	11.4
Depersonalization	7.1	4.9	7.6	5.5
Lack of Personal Accomplishment	38.3	6.8	39.0	6.7

*Note:* Female (N=80), Male (N= 24)

A second one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if a relationship existed between age and the three burnout subscale scores (see Table 11). No significant differences were revealed by the results, indicating no relationships between age and any of the burnout subscales: Emotional Exhaustion ( $F= .376$ ,  $p=.688$ ), Depersonalization ( $F= .218$ ,  $p=.805$ ) and Lack of Personal Accomplishment ( $F=.169$ ,  $p=.845$ ).

Table 11

*Descriptive Statistics of Age by Burnout Areas*

Burnout	21-40 Mean SD		41-50 Mean SD		51+ Mean SD	
Emotional Exhaustion	20.5	10.0	21.3	12.4	23.0	12.4
Depersonalization	6.9	4.4	7.7	6.0	4.8	.99
Lack of Personal Accomplishment	38.2	7.0	39.0	6.3	38.2	7.0

*Note:* 21-40 N=48, 41-50 N=32, 51+ N=24

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also performed to determine if a relationship existed between race and the three burnout subscale scores (see Table 12). Results revealed a significant difference between blacks and whites in the area of Emotional Exhaustion ( $F= 8.55, p=.004$ ). However, there were no significant differences in the areas of Depersonalization ( $F= .383, p=.053$ ) and Lack of Personal Accomplishment ( $F= 2.24, p=.137$ ).

Table 12

*Descriptive Statistics of Race by Burnout Areas*

Burnout	Black		White	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Emotional Exhaustion	15.5	10.3	23.2	11.0
Depersonalization	5.4	5.3	7.7	4.7
Lack of Personal Accomplishment	40.3	6.7	38.0	6.4

*Note:* Black N=22, White N=78

Another one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if a relationship existed between years of experience and the three burnout subscale scores (see Table 13). No relationship was found between years of experience and burnout. Results revealed no significant differences between years of experience in the areas of Emotional Exhaustion ( $F=3.08$ ,  $p=.051$ ), Depersonalization ( $F=1.94$ ,  $p=.149$ ), and Lack of Personal Accomplishment ( $F=2.82$ ,  $p=.064$ ).



Table 13

*Descriptive Statistics of Years of Experience by Burnout Areas*

Burnout	1-5 Mean SD		6-15 Mean SD		16+ Mean SD	
Emotional Exhaustion	17.7	9.5	23.0	11.3	23.8	12.6
Depersonalization	5.9	4.7	7.6	5.4	8.3	4.7
Lack of Personal Accomplishment	40.5	6.0	37.8	6.8	36.8	7.1

*Note:* 1-5 N=36, 6-15 N=41, 16+ N=27

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also performed to determine if a relationship existed between degree level and the three burnout subscale scores (see Table 14). Results revealed no relationship or significant differences between degree levels and the areas of Emotional Exhaustion ( $F=2.34$ ,  $p=.102$ ), Depersonalization ( $F=2.48$ ,  $p=.089$ ) and Lack of Personal Accomplishment ( $F=1.14$ ,  $p=.324$ ).

Table 14

*Descriptive Statistics of Degree Level by Burnout Areas*

Burnout	Bachelors Mean SD		Masters Mean SD		Specialists/Doctorate Mean SD	
Emotional Exhaustion	17.8	9.4	23.2	10.9	23.0	12.9
Depersonalization	5.8	4.0	7.3	4.7	8.5	6.0
Lack of Personal Accomplishment	39.7	6.4	37.3	6.6	38.6	7.2

*Note:* Bachelors N=32, Masters N=40, Specialists/Doctorate N=32

## Overarching Question

*Overarching research question: Is there a relationship between individual teacher personality and teacher burnout?*

## Discussion

To answer the overarching question, the researcher began by analyzing participant's responses to both the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* and the *Maslach Educator's Survey*. The researcher used descriptive statistics to determine whether a link exists between personality type and teacher burnout (see Table 15). Also, the researcher ran a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results did not reveal any significant differences in the areas of Emotional Exhaustion ( $F=.627$ ,  $p=.787$ ), Depersonalization ( $F=.569$ ,  $p=.835$ ), and Lack of Personal Accomplishment ( $F=1.07$ ,  $p=.393$ ). No relationships were determined between personality type and burnout.

Table 15

*Descriptive Statistics of Burnout by Personality Types*

	EE		DP		PA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
ENFJ	16.3	11.6	5.6	5.5	43.6	4.6
INFJ	15.7	5.9	4.3	2.1	44.7	1.5
ENFP	20.8	11.3	6.3	4.4	35.6	5.2
ESFP	18.8	10.1	6.4	5.4	39.9	6.7
ISFP	25.5	14.5	8.8	3.6	38.2	5.1
ESTJ	19.6	14.9	8.2	7.2	38.3	6.9
ISTJ	23.1	12.0	8.2	5.4	37.6	7.8
ESTP	28.3	13.6	6.0	5.6	41.7	5.5
ISTP	21.7	7.0	10.7	3.8	35.0	4.6
ESFJ	24.6	10.3	7.8	4.8	36.4	7.1
ISFJ	20.4	10.1	6.5	4.3	37.4	7.5

*Note:* E-I = Extroversion-Introversion, N-S = Intuitive-Sensing, T-F = Thinking-Feeling, J-P = Judging-Perceiving

EE=Emotional Exhaustion, DP=Depersonalization, PA=Lack of Personal Accomplishment

### Summary

By analyzing the results of the demographics questionnaire and the results of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M*, the researcher used frequency statistics to determine whether the demographics of gender, age, race, years of experience, and degree level were related to individual personality type. None of the demographic elements were found to be related to personality type.

The same demographics elements were then analyzed to see if they were related to teacher burnout as determined by the *Maslach Educator's Survey*. Each subscale of teacher burnout was considered independently. With the assistance of SPSS, the researcher used one-way ANOVAs to determine that relationships existed between Emotional Exhaustion and gender and in race. Females demonstrated higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion than males, and whites reported greater Emotional Exhaustion than blacks. Although significant differences did not exist in Years of Experience and in Degree Level, interesting patterns did develop. In both, levels of burnout increase as years and degrees increase.

Based on the self-reported personality types of teachers using the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M* and the categories and levels of burnout reported on the *Maslach Educator's Survey*, the researcher used descriptive statistics to determine whether the two were related. Neither emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, nor lack of personal accomplishment was significantly related to individual teacher personality.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary

Burnout was first defined by Freudenberger (1974) as “to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources” (p. 159). He believed that “the dedicated and the committed” employees are most prone to experience burnout because they “work too much, too long, and too intensely” (p. 161). When first considered, burnout was linked to those employed in the helping professions, but teachers were not included until years later. Subsequent research has determined that educators also suffer from burnout related symptoms and that these can be caused by personal and/or environmental and organizational factors. Regardless of the causes, burnout negatively impacts the teacher and his or her performance in the classroom. Ultimately, students suffer because of teacher burnout.

This study was done to determine whether burnout was related to individual teacher personalities in three rural, public middle schools in central Georgia. The overarching research question that guided this study was: Is there a relationship between individual teacher personality and teacher burnout? Additionally, the following subquestions were addressed:

1. To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to personality type?

2. To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to teachers' levels and areas of burnout?

In order to answer these questions, the researcher gathered data from three schools and administered two self-reporting instruments and one demographics questionnaire to the teachers. One hundred eight teachers completed the two instruments and the questionnaire; however, when data was analyzed, four were eliminated in order not to skew statistical results. For the bulk of the research, the sample consisted of 104 respondents. The instruments included a demographics questionnaire developed by the researcher, the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M*, and the *Maslach Educator's Survey*. The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M* revealed a personality type for each respondent, while the *Maslach Educator's Survey* measured levels and areas of teacher burnout. The analysis of quantitative data was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The statistical procedures used for calculation included frequencies, descriptive statistics, chi-square analyses, and one-way ANOVAs.

By analyzing the results of the demographics questionnaire and the results of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M*, the researcher used frequency statistics to determine whether the demographics of gender, age, race, years of experience, and degree level were related to individual personality type. None of the demographic elements were found to be related to personality type.

The same demographics elements were then analyzed to see if they were related to teacher burnout as determined by the *Maslach Educator's Survey*. Each subscale of teacher burnout was considered independently. With the assistance of SPSS, the researcher used one-way ANOVAs to determine that relationships existed between Emotional Exhaustion and gender and race. Females demonstrated higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion than males, and whites reported greater Emotional Exhaustion than blacks. Although significant differences did not exist in Years of Experience and in Degree Level, interesting patterns did develop. In both, levels of burnout increase as years and degrees increase.

Based on the self-reported personality types of teachers using the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M* and the categories and levels of burnout reported on the *Maslach Educator's Survey*, the researcher used descriptive statistics to determine whether the two were related. Neither Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, nor Lack of Personal Accomplishment was significantly related to individual teacher personality.

#### Discussion of Research Findings

This discussion will be ordered as the data were presented in Chapter Four, with the discussion of the subquestion findings preceding the discussion of the overarching question. As these are discussed, the findings of this study are related to the original literature in Chapter Two.

*Subquestion 1: To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to personality type?*

#### Discussion

The demographic characteristics mentioned were analyzed using frequency statistics to determine whether each was related to personality type. Although McCrae and Costa (1997) found that a relationship may exist between personality traits and an individual's cultural or biological basis, the researcher found no significant relationship between personality type and age, gender, race, years of experience, or degree level. Every individual is unique and exists as a product of heredity and environment. The sixteen personality types designated by the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* were not evenly represented among respondents, but the researcher believes that this was to be expected because the sample was limited to teachers. Of the five personality types that were represented by no more than one respondent, four of those were NTs (INFJ, ENTJ, INTJ, ENTP, INTP). Those who are NT focus on theoretical frameworks such as science, technology and management; thus, populations among teachers are not expected to be high. (Letters indicate the following characteristics: E/I – Extrovert/Introvert, S/N – Sensing/Intuition, T/F – Thinking/Feeling, and J/P – Judging/Perceptive.)

Sixty-nine percent of participants fell into five personality categories (ENFP, ESTJ, ISTJ, ESFJ, and ISFJ). Three of these top five categories were extroverted, indicating that those within them derive their energy from others. Four of these five were sensing rather than intuitive, indicating that those within



these categories focus mainly on what they perceive through their five senses. Three of these were represented by feelers who base conclusions on personal or social values with a focus on understanding and harmony. The other two were thinkers who base their conclusions on logical analysis with a focus on objectivity and detachment. Four of the first five categories were judging rather than perceiving, meaning that those within this category prefer the decisiveness and closure that result from dealing with the outer world using either thinking or feeling.

The demographic variables of age, race, years of experience, and degree level were fairly evenly represented among the personality types. However, when specifically looking at gender, the researcher found that 63.8% of the females fell within the four categories of ENFP, ISTJ, ESFJ, and ISFJ. Three of these four categories reveal that females were primarily sensing rather than intuitive, primarily feeling rather than thinking, and judging rather than perceiving. More than 62% of males, on the other hand, fell within three categories: ESTJ, ISTJ, and ISFJ. In all three of the top male categories, sensing dominated over intuition, and judging dominated over perceiving.

*Subquestion 2: To what extent do the demographic characteristics of age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level relate to teachers' levels and areas of burnout?*

## Discussion

By utilizing SPSS and a series of one-way ANOVAs, the researcher compared each of the demographic characteristics to each of the burnout

subscales (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Lack of Personal Accomplishment).

Past research has documented that younger teachers are more likely to evidence signs of burnout than older teachers, especially those within their first five years of teaching (Fennick, 1993; Schwab, 1995). However, Friedman's (1991) research found that burnout rises with teachers' age and years of experience and peaks within the ages of 41-45 and 20-24 years of experience, after which it declines. This research determined that no significant relationship existed between age and any of the burnout subscales. Even though no relationship was significant, the data did suggest some patterns in both means and standard deviations that could be further investigated in different populations and/or with larger samples. In Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization, teachers in the youngest age group scored noticeably lower than all others. This same pattern repeated when studying the data for years of experience and degree level. Friedman's (1991) research was inconsistent with the current study because it reported that teachers with higher levels of education reported higher levels of burnout.

Unlike Friedman's research (1991) that found that male teachers reported higher levels of burnout than female teachers, the current study found the opposite. Females reported higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion than males. The relationship between differences in gender and burnout was significant in this area. However, in the areas of Depersonalization and Lack of Personal Accomplishment, the relationships were not significant. Perhaps since the males

represented only 23.1% of the population, the results would differ in a larger population.

The current research also established a significant relationship between between race and Emotional Exhaustion. Whites reported higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion than blacks. Although Blacks reported higher levels of Depersonalization and Lack of Personal Accomplishment than Whites, these differences were not significant. Since only 22% of the population was Black, results might differ in a larger population.

*Overarching Question: Is there a relationship between individual teacher personality and teacher burnout?*

#### Discussion

To determine whether a relationship existed between teacher personality and teacher burnout, the researcher used SPSS, analyzing descriptive statistics and running ANOVAs. The current research did not reveal any relationships between any of the burnout subscales of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Lack of Personal Accomplishment and teacher personality type. Though McEnany (1986) suggested that there were personality profiles that were associated with being a “survivor,” this profile or these personality characteristics did not reveal themselves within a single personality type as determined by the MBTI. The research of Toscando and Ponterdolph (1998) in the nursing field was consistent with the current research on teachers. Toscando and Ponterdolph concluded that “burnout may not be related to the

nurse's psychosocial construct" (p. 32N). Thus, neither the nursing or teaching study identified a correlative link between personality and burnout.

### Conclusions

Using the data, the following findings were revealed:

1. No significant relationships exist between personality type and age, gender, race, years of experience, and degree level.
2. Although no significant relationships exist between teacher burnout (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Lack of Personal Accomplishment) and age, years of experience, and degree level, patterns did emerge from the data.
3. Females reported higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion than Males.
4. Whites reported higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion than Blacks.
5. No significant correlation exists between teacher burnout as determined by the *Maslach Educator's Survey* and teacher personality as determined by the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M*.

While this study did not reveal a significant relationship between personality type and teacher burnout, the researcher believes that the possibility of a relationship still exists. Perhaps if the sample were larger or more diverse, a relationship would have been found. As a building level administrator, this researcher has experienced the challenges of teacher attrition and believes that schools and systems would do well to analyze personality types in an effort to

determine practices that would attract and retain teachers. Much time, effort, and money is spent on programs to mentor new teachers. Personality study should certainly be included in these new teacher orientation/mentoring programs.

### Implications

Implicit in all research is the hope that what is learned as a result will make a contribution to or improve the practice of the field of work. So it is with this research. As a practicing Georgia educator, middle school principal, and future president of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals, it is the desire of this researcher that administrators and policy makers realize that the following points are cogent and germane:

1. Contemporary education has introduced a new era of accountability. With the continual stress on teachers, system and building level administrators need to be cognizant of the negative impact of teacher burnout. These same leaders need to be vigilant in combating the conditions that lead to teacher burnout and resourceful in minimizing the impact of burnout on student achievement.
2. Georgia is experiencing a critical teacher shortage. Teacher recruitment and unfilled teaching positions prove that adequate numbers of teacher candidates just do not exist. School systems must do an even better job of creating environments that not only invite teachers but retain them.

Educational leaders and organizations must begin to focus on climate and culture in new and more meaningful ways. While the basis for every decision must be students and their improved achievement, the welfare of teachers must be a primary concern.

In addition, this researcher recommends that both the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* and the *Maslach Educator's Survey* be utilized in schools and districts to improve relationships among teachers and to detect potential problems. When conducting the current study, the researcher gathered data on-site at three schools. In each case, the teachers particularly enjoyed The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*. They were excited to share their type with each other and to find others who had identical or similar types. Each principal commented that the teachers really enjoyed the personality inventory, that this was a "culture-building activity" or that this activity was a "morale builder". Perhaps this instrument would be good to use during professional learning to point out similarities and differences among staff members and the impact of various personality types of adults and students in our classrooms.

The *Maslach Educator's Survey* provides a crucial perspective on the health of the organizational climate in a building for both teaching staff and students. This tool, though not designed as a clinical-diagnostic tool, may be used to assist educators as they self-assess their effectiveness and make decisions regarding their stress and career management. This researcher also suggests that if teachers within a certain building or grade level score in the high range for burnout that the administration attempt to identify the individual and

environmental factors that contribute to these scores and work with teachers to eliminate or reduce these conditions.

### Recommendations

This researcher is still interested in the link or possible link between personality type and burnout. The researcher would like to determine why inconsistencies existed in this study and those of previous researchers. For example, why did younger teachers exhibit lower levels of teacher burnout than their more experienced counterparts? Did the rural setting for these schools impact the results? Do small, rural systems provide more support to beginning teachers in order to increase attrition because of the difficulties in teacher recruitment? Would a larger sample change the results? Would the results of the research change if the sample population changed to that of teachers in elementary school or high school?

Another interesting approach of research into teacher burnout would be to determine the effect of school reforms such as site-based management and increased accountability on teacher burnout. Contemporary education has moved in the direction of shared decision making and data-driven instruction. If research could determine whether increased responsibility and accountability are correlated with increased burnout scores, the profession would benefit.

Although many studies have focused on teacher burnout, few have focused on engagement, the phenomenon that is considered the opposite of burnout. Determining characteristics that keep educators energized and fulfilled in their work could also promote positive aspects in the field of education. In

addition, this type of research could be done with a focus on teachers or administrators. Determining whether engaged administrators have more effective schools and whether engaged teachers have students who achieve at higher levels would certainly be interesting.

In this age of increased accountability for all educational stakeholders, the researcher also wonders whether there is a link between student personality and burnout. Are students pushed to do too much too early? It seems that developmentally appropriate education may be a phenomenon of the past. Is there a relationship between student personality, disengagement, student burnout, and students who drop out of school? Perhaps study in this area would help us to increase our graduation rates.

In all educational issues, the bottom line should always be the student. Research to determine the impact of teacher burnout on student achievement would definitely increase the awareness of teacher burnout.

#### Dissemination

It is the researcher's desire to contribute to the existing research on teacher burnout in order for administrators and policy makers to make decisions that might possibly reduce teacher burnout in order to ultimately increase student achievement. The researcher has determined that the results of this study will be disseminated to interested parties by release on the World Wide Web. In addition, the researcher will submit applications to present findings at professional conferences such as conferences for the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders, the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals, the



Georgia School Boards Association, and the Georgia School Superintendents Association. The Georgia Middle School Association and The National Youth At-Risk Conferences might be other venues for presentation. Significant findings from the current research might also be reduced into short articles submitted for publication in professional journals.

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## APPENDICES



APPENDIX A  
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the information on this form. The information collected in this form is used for the purposes of identifying how and to what extent demographic trends are represented within the sample population. All information will be kept anonymous to preserve confidentiality.

YOUR AGE:

☐ 21 – 30  
☐ 31 – 40  
☐ 41 – 50  
☐ 51 – 60  
☐ 61+

YOUR GENDER:

☐ Female

☐ Male

YOUR RACE:

☐ Black  
☐ White  
☐ Asian  
☐ Hispanic  
☐ Other

NUMBER OF YEARS EMPLOYED AT THE CURRENT SCHOOL:

☐ 1 – 2  
☐ 3 – 5  
☐ 6 – 15  
☐ 16 – 25  
☐ 25+

DO YOU PLAN TO CONTINUE TEACHING DURING THE 2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR?

☐ Yes

☐ No

## APPENDIX B

### PRINCIPAL CONTACT FORM FOR PERMISSION TO SURVEY TEACHERS

Dear (Name of Principal),

I hope this letter finds you well and that all is going smoothly as this school year hurriedly passes us by. I wanted to follow up my recent phone call with this letter providing more details about my research.

I am currently enrolled in Georgia Southern University and am engaged in a study of the relationship between teacher burnout and individual teacher personality types. As you are no doubt aware, we face challenges in recruiting and retaining educators within the public schools, and the attrition of competent educators is crucial in ensuring the quality and consistency of the education provided to our students. I am requesting permission to meet with teachers within your school and collect data on their unique work-related experiences. All information will be kept anonymous and the names of those affiliated with your school will not be included within the research project. I will need to meet with your teachers for approximately one hour. During this hour, I will explain the purpose of my research, allow teachers to determine whether or not they will participate, and have them complete three short instruments: 1) demographic data, 2) the Maslach Educator's Survey, and 3) the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. This meeting can be scheduled at your convenience.

I would be happy to discuss this matter further at your convenience. Please contact me anytime. My telephone contact numbers are: 912.568.7166 (work), 478.374.4964 (home), or 478.290.7301 (cell). You could also reach me by e-mail at [mdennis@wheeler.k12.ga.us](mailto:mdennis@wheeler.k12.ga.us).

I sincerely thank you for your time and consideration, and I truly appreciate what you do for children. I look forward to hearing from you soon and hope that we can schedule some time for me to meet with your teachers.

Sincerely,

Melinda M. Dennis

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-681-0843		Veazey Hall 2021
		P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-681-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Melinda Dennis  
1022 Bay Springs Ch Rd  
Eastman, GA 31023

Linda M. Arthur  
P.O. Box 08131

**CC:** Charles E. Patterson  
Associate Vice President for Research

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** March 10, 2008

**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

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After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H08173** and titled **“The Relationship between Personality Type and Burnout in Selected Rural Middle School Teachers”**, it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

*Eleanor Haynes (Electronic)*

Eleanor Haynes  
Compliance Officer

APPENDIX D  
INFORMED CONSENT




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## COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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### DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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#### **INFORMED CONSENT FOR DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT PARTICIPATION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TYPE AND BURNOUT IN SELECTED RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS**

I am a doctoral student in the School of Leadership, Technology and Human Development at Georgia Southern University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project designed to determine whether a relationship exists between individual teacher personality and certain job-related attitudes. This project is designed and is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership.

Your participation in this project will include completion of three instruments included in this packet. The first instrument is a data sheet that will provide me with demographic information about you that is related to the research I am conducting. The second instrument, *The Myers-Briggs Temperament Indicator*, should take fifteen to twenty-five minutes to complete. This is a self-scoring instrument that will, based on your preferences, provide you with a description of your personality. The third instrument, *The Maslach Educator's Survey*, is a survey of job-related attitudes and should take you no more than ten to fifteen minutes to complete.

The information obtained from the completion of these instruments will not be shared with anyone in your local school district. The information will be used for my research purposes only and will be kept in a locked filing cabinet until my dissertation is completed. No schools or individuals will be identified. There is, of course, no penalty should you decide not to participate. Risks from participating in the study are no more than would be encountered in everyday life; and, of course, you may stop participating at any time without penalty by notifying the researcher.

Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-0843.

I appreciate your giving time to this project which will help me to learn more about teacher personalities and job-related attitudes. Your consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above will be indicated by the completion and return of the three instruments provided.

#### Principal Investigator:

Melinda M. Dennis  
1022 Bay Springs Church Rd  
Eastman, GA 31023  
Home Phone: (478)374-4964  
Cell Phone: (478)290-7301  
e-mail: [mdennis@wheeler.k12.ga.us](mailto:mdennis@wheeler.k12.ga.us)

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